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លីកាដូ



LICADHO

CAMBODIAN LEAGUE FOR THE
PROMOTION AND DEFENSE OF
HUMAN RIGHTS



STATUS UPDATE

HARASSMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN CAMBODIA

A report issued in
November 2021



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Harassment on Social Media in Cambodia

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LICADHO

CAMBODIAN LEAGUE FOR THE PROMOTION
AND DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Artworks by Penkuro

CAMBODIAN LEAGUE FOR THE PROMOTION AND DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS (LICADHO)

LICADHO is a national Cambodian human rights organisation. Since its establishment in 1992, LICADHO has been at the forefront of efforts to protect civil, political, economic and social rights in Cambodia and to promote respect for them by the Cambodian government and institutions. Building on its past achievements, LICADHO continues to be an advocate for the Cambodian people and a monitor of the government through wide ranging human rights programs from its main office in Phnom Penh and 12 provincial offices.

MONITORING & PROTECTION



PROMOTION & ADVOCACY

Monitoring of State Violations & Women's and Children's Rights:

Monitors investigate human rights violations perpetrated by the State and violations made against women and children. Victims are provided assistance through interventions with local authorities and court officials.

Medical Assistance & Social Work:

A medical team provides assistance to prisoners and prison officials in urban and rural prisons, victims of human rights violations and families in resettlement sites. Social workers conduct needs assessments of victims and their families and provide short-term material and food.

Prison Monitoring:

Researchers monitor urban and rural prisons to assess prison conditions and ensure that pre-trial detainees have access to legal representation.

Paralegal & Legal Representation:

Victims are provided legal advice by a paralegal team and, in key cases, legal representation by human rights lawyers.

Supporting Unions & Grassroots Groups and Networks:

Assistance to unions, grassroots groups and affected communities to provide protection and legal services, and to enhance their capacity to campaign and advocate for human rights.

Public Advocacy & Outreach:

Human rights cases are compiled into a central electronic database, so that accurate information can be easily accessed and analyzed, and produced into periodic public reports (written, audio and visual) or used for other advocacy.

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Definitions



Activists – Human rights defenders, environmental activists, political activists, land activists, civil society leaders, and/or trade union leaders.

Doxing – Maliciously sharing someone else’s personal details such as a phone number, address, or identification details without permission.

Facebook-owned platforms – Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The company recently announced a new brand, changing its name from Facebook to Meta.

Gender – The socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women, girls, men, and boys.

Gender expression – How a person outwardly expresses their gender, within the context of societal expectations of gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language, voice, name, and pronouns.

Gender identity – A person’s deeply-felt, inherent sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.

LGBT+ people¹ – Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other gender non-conforming people.

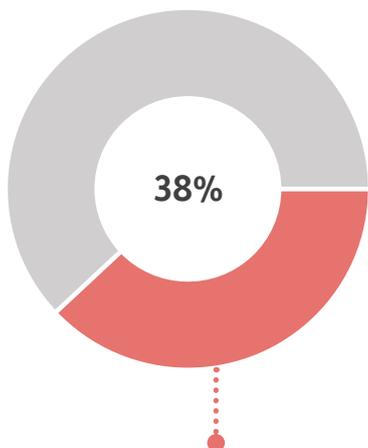
Online harassment – Any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological, or social harm or suffering that is committed, assisted, or aggravated by the use of information communication technology (ICT), such as social media, mobile phones and smartphones, or the Internet more broadly.

Social media – Any online sites, applications, or platforms which have an interpersonal element, including traditional social media platforms, messaging or video call platforms, games, dating platforms, discussion sites, and more.

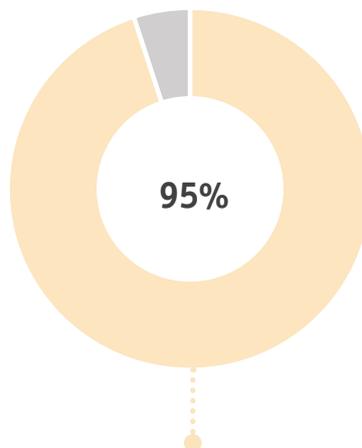
Youth – People aged 18-24 years.

¹ This definition was selected for this report based on the sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions reported by the survey respondents.

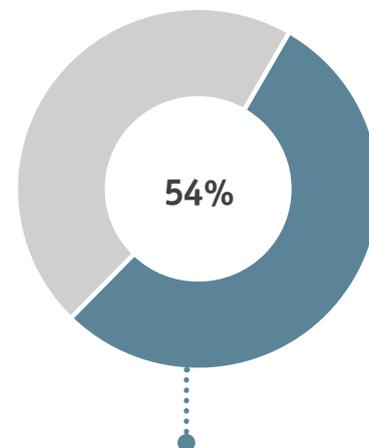
Key Findings



Percentage of survey respondents who have experienced online harassment



Of the survey respondents who have experienced online harassment, the percentage who experienced it on at least one Facebook-owned platform



Percentage of survey respondents who have seen someone else experience online harassment

The Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO) surveyed more than 700 people and conducted in-depth interviews with 12 people to learn about online harassment. Here is what we found:

Social media is important to people's lives. Almost all survey respondents reported regularly using Facebook (97%), Messenger (84%), and Telegram (83%). Survey respondents most commonly reported using social media to access information and read the news, stay in touch with others, and for work or study. Thirty-six percent of respondents reported that they use social media to speak out about things that are important to them, with men more likely to do so than women.

Online harassment is common. Thirty-eight percent of people surveyed reported having experienced online harassment. LGBT+ people, activists, and youth reported higher rates of online harassment. While women and men reported online harassment at roughly equal rates, the types and impacts were often different. In addition, 54% of respondents have witnessed someone else experience online harassment; in most cases that other person was a woman.

Sexual harassment was the most reported type of online harassment. Twenty percent of women reported having received an unsolicited sexual message, photograph, video, or request. This number jumps to 24% for women aged 18 to 24 years, and even higher rates for LGBT+ people. The other most common types of harassment include hacking, discrimination, and embarrassment.

Discrimination is common, especially for LGBT+ people. Twenty-three percent of LGBT+ people surveyed reported having experienced discrimination online. Among them,

93% have experienced online discrimination more than once.

Facebook-owned platforms are the leading sites of online harassment. Ninety-five percent of survey respondents who reported experiencing online harassment did so on at least one platform owned by Facebook. Telegram, a messaging application, was the next most common site of harassment.

People are being targeted for what they think and who they are. Of the respondents who have experienced online harassment, 23% reported that they were targeted in connection to their views or opinions; 19% reported that they were targeted in connection to their gender or gender expression; and 18% reported that they were targeted in connection to their skin colour or appearance.

Perpetrators are often strangers or anonymous, and believed to be mostly men. Sixty-five percent of survey respondents who reported online harassment believe they were targeted by a man, while 23% believe they were targeted by a woman, with some people reporting harassment by multiple people of different genders and others unsure of the perpetrators' gender.

The Cambodian government surveils and harasses activists and others to repress online freedom of expression. Some survey respondents reported that authorities summoned them for questioning, asked them to remove their post or to apologise for something they posted online, with activists disproportionately targeted.

Online harassment is pushing people off social media.

Thirty-six percent of survey respondents who have experienced online harassment reduced their social media use, stopped entirely, or deleted an account after being harassed, with women more likely to log off than men. Youth were particularly likely to step back from social media because of online harassment. Among the youth respondents that have experienced online harassment, 53% reported using social media less as a result.

Online harassment can have severe offline impacts.

Of survey respondents who reported experiencing online harassment, 80% found it somewhat or very upsetting and 71% reported at least one negative impact. Twenty-seven percent of respondents who have experienced online harassment reported fear for their physical safety or the safety of people close to them; 24% reported feeling withdrawn or less social; and 19% reported lower self-esteem. Some respondents reported severe impacts because of online harassment; 13% reported physical harm or violence offline, 11% reported trouble finding a job, education, housing, or services, and 4% reported suicidal thoughts. Youth and LGBT+ people more often reported negative impacts, while activists were most likely to fear for their physical safety.

Responses to address online harassment are inadequate.

Only 16% of respondents who have experienced instances of online harassment feel that those instances were fully and fairly resolved. The most common responses to online harassment were to unfriend or block the perpetrator or their posts or to increase privacy or security settings. Several interviewees, however, shared that blocking was often inadequate to completely stop perpetrators from harassing them online. Seventy-six percent of survey respondents think that at least one actor should do more to stop online harassment, particularly authorities and social media companies.

Social media companies and the Cambodian government must fulfil their responsibilities to protect human rights online.

Many of the problems raised in this report are already well known to social media companies – particularly Facebook – but they have failed to meaningfully act upon them. Social media companies' terms of service, privacy and security settings, and reporting features are often confusing, inaccessible, and ineffective. They are not consistently available in Khmer language, giving Cambodians limited control over their online safety. Facebook's reporting processes are similarly difficult to use, responses are often slow, and users receive minimal updates about their progress. Greater transparency is urgently needed. In October and November 2021, LICADHO wrote to Facebook to share key findings of this report and request further information and transparency. Facebook failed to provide any meaningful response.

Key Recommendations

The Cambodian government and social media companies must take a leading role to end online harassment. Full recommendations appear at the end of this report.

To social media companies

- **Maximise default protections.** Implement default privacy and security settings that provide maximum protections against online harassment.
- **Localise safety features and ensure they are easy to find and use.** Make all terms of service, community standards, privacy and security settings, reporting mechanisms, supporting material, and transparency reports available in Khmer language. Proactively raise awareness about them.
- **Increase transparency.** Release Cambodia-specific transparency reports with granular information about the number of reports from users; proactively acted upon content; government requests; restrictions based on local law; the type of reports, requests, restrictions or content; and the company's specific actions.

To the Cambodian government

- **Stop perpetrating online harassment.** Immediately and unconditionally release all activists and others who have been imprisoned for exercising their right to freedom of expression online. Stop harassing women for their online clothing or speech choices.
- **End excessive, unchecked surveillance.** Repeal or amend the Law on Telecommunications, Interministerial Prakas No. 170, and Sub-Decree No. 23 on the National Internet Gateway. Discard the draft Cybercrime Law and the draft Public Order Law.
- **Increase capacity to end online harassment.** Regularly train local authorities, police, prosecutors, judges, lawyers, and teachers on digital literacy, online harassment, prevention, responses, and the existing legal framework.

Introduction



Online harassment in Cambodia by state actors and individuals is undermining the rights to freedom of expression, privacy, access to information, and more. The Internet and social media’s potential to connect individuals and promote active civic and political participation is being thwarted by government surveillance and harassment, as well as discrimination, sexual harassment, threats, and other forms of online harassment from private individuals. Considering that Cambodia’s free press is highly restricted and that traditional media is largely controlled by, or aligned with, the ruling party, social media is an essential place for Cambodians to access information and engage

in political discussions. But online harassment is pushing people offline and can have severe offline consequences for those who experience it.

Online harassment potentially impacts the 8.86 million Cambodians – more than half of the total population – who use the Internet as of January 2021.² The country is home to 21 million mobile connections, and 90% of social media users access these services only via a mobile phone.³ Social media use grew by 24% in 2020, as internet access continued to expand across the country.⁴ COVID-19 restrictions, increased unemployment, and prolonged school closures have further moved people’s lives online.



² Simon Kemp, “Digital 2021: Cambodia”, 11 February 2021, available at: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-cambodia>

³ As above.

⁴ As above.

A growth in social media use raises concerns about an increase in online harassment. One study from LIRNEasia in 2018 found that 29% of women internet users and 23% of men internet users in Cambodia had experienced online harassment.⁵ While online harassment is increasingly recognised as a global problem, Cambodia is largely missing from many international studies on the topic.⁶

This research was conducted to learn more about who is facing online harassment in Cambodia, the types of harassment that are most common, the impacts of online harassment, and potential solutions to address these issues.

What is Online Harassment?

We define online harassment as any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological, or social harm or suffering that is committed, assisted, or aggravated by the use of information communication technology (ICT), such as social media, mobile phones and smartphones, or the Internet more broadly.

This definition draws upon the definition of online violence against women and girls provided by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. In many instances, online harassment is an act of gender-based violence when it is committed

against a woman because she is a woman or affects women disproportionately.⁷

The key types of online harassment that we aimed to learn about were:

- Discrimination or discriminatory language
- Distribution of intimate photographs or videos without consent
- Doxing (maliciously sharing someone else's personal details such as a phone number, address, or identification details without permission)
- Hacking or unauthorised use of an account
- Impersonation for the purpose of harming someone (such as creating a fake account or sending messages in someone else's name)
- Intentional embarrassment
- Restrictions on online expression imposed by authorities, such as being summoned for questioning due to an online post, being asked to delete it, or to issue an apology
- Sexual harassment (receiving unsolicited sexual messages, photographs, videos, or requests)
- Spreading of lies about someone
- Threats

⁵ "AfterAccess: ICT access and use in Asia and the Global South", LIRNEasia, p. 63, 2018, available at: <https://lirneasia.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/LIRNEasia-AfterAccess-Asia-Report.pdf>. LIRNEasia's report defines online harassment as being called offensive names, purposefully embarrassed or criticised in another way, physically threatened, sexually harassed, or repeatedly approached by unwanted contacts.

⁶ See for example "Online Violence Against Women in Asia: A Multicountry Study", UN Women, 2020, available at: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2020/12/ap-ict-vawg-report-7dec20.pdf?la=en&vs=4251>; "Free to be Online? Girls' and young women's experiences of online harassment", Plan International, 2020, available at: <https://plan-international.org/publications/freetobeonline>; "Measuring the prevalence of online violence against women", The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021, available at: <https://onlineviolencewomen.eiu.com/>

⁷ Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective, A/HRC/38/47, para. 22-23, 2018, available at: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/38/47>

Online Harassment and Human Rights



Human rights protected offline must also be protected online.⁸ The social, economic, political, and other power structures that threaten human rights offline are often amplified online. Online harassment can violate the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, access to information, participation in cultural and political life, non-discrimination, religious freedom, education, children's rights, and more. Internet users also have the right to protections against unlawful interference with their privacy and correspondence, and unlawful attacks on their reputation.⁹

The Cambodian government is obligated to protect these rights through its Constitution and ratification of various international treaties.¹⁰ The government has similarly committed to addressing discrimination against women and gender-based violence, which UN experts have recognised can occur in both online and offline spaces.¹¹

Protecting these rights is also the responsibility of internet companies and social media platforms. The Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights establish global standards for such private sector actors to avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts, conduct due-diligence, prevent or mitigate impacts linked to their

operations or services, provide remediation, report on how impacts are addressed, and more.¹² Due diligence must begin with businesses integrating “a human rights lens that takes into account potential and actual adverse impacts on people,” to address and prevent those impacts, followed by acting upon findings, tracking effectiveness, and communicating on how impacts are addressed.¹³ The argument for internet companies to implement and fully realise the Guiding Principles is strong, considering their “overwhelming role in public life globally,” as highlighted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression.¹⁴

However, addressing online harassment must not be misused to justify violations of fundamental freedoms. Responses to online harassment must be carefully crafted in consideration of established legal exceptions to prevent disproportionate restrictions or further erosion of fundamental freedoms online. Any restrictions to freedoms of expression, assembly, or association online must be provided by narrowly tailored laws, pursue a legitimate aim, and respect the principles of necessity and proportionality. Restrictions must be applied by an independent body and ensure the possibility to challenge and remedy wrongful restrictions.¹⁵

⁸ Human Rights Council Resolution 32/13, para. 1, 2016, available at: https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/32/13

⁹ Article 17, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

¹⁰ The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia guarantees “The Kingdom of Cambodia shall recognise and respect human rights as stipulated in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human rights, the covenants and conventions related to human rights, women’s and children’s rights” (Article 31). See also Articles 32, 35, 38, 40-43, 45, 48 and 65. Cambodia has ratified the ICCPR, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and others.

¹¹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women General Recommendation No. 35, para. 20, 2017, available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/CEDAW_C_GC_35_8267_E.pdf; Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective, A/HRC/38/47, para. 93, 2018, available at: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/38/47>

¹² See “Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework”, 2011, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr_en.pdf

¹³ The report of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, A/73/163, para. 43, 2018, available at: https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/73/163

¹⁴ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, A/HRC/38/35, para. 10, 2018, available at: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/38/35>

¹⁵ Articles 19(3) and 22(2), ICCPR; Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Frank La Rue, A/HRC/17/27, para. 69, 2011, available at: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/17/27>



In July and August 2021, 718 people participated in an online survey distributed by LICADHO. The survey was distributed in Khmer only. It asked 27 multiple-choice questions and two short response questions about participants' backgrounds, social media use, experiences of online harassment, and how online harassment impacted them and their responses to it, if applicable. Participation was limited to adults aged 18 years or older because of difficulties obtaining informed consent from parents or guardians prior to children's participation. The survey explained the research purpose and how the findings would be used. Participation was anonymous, voluntary, and no incentives were provided. The only mandatory questions were to confirm respondents' consent to participate and that they were aged 18 years or over.

The survey was open to people of all genders and distributed to participants through over 25 groups and networks, such as unions, communities, youth groups, university students, and non-governmental organisations. Groups were selected to promote a diversity of respondents based on age, gender, sexual orientation, location, occupation, and other characteristics. The survey was not distributed publicly online due to security and quality control concerns.

The findings are disaggregated by some identity characteristics, and most often broken down by women, men, youth, activists, and LGBT+ people. Many respondents belong to more than one of these groups.

In August and September, 12 people (7 women, 4 men, and 1 girl) were interviewed to find out more about their experiences. Only people who had experienced online harassment were invited to participate in interviews. Interviewees were selected to promote a diversity of

experiences. Most interview participants were survey respondents who voluntarily provided their contact details for additional follow up. Two people were invited to participate in interviews after they came to LICADHO for support after experiencing online harassment. Interviews lasted from 35 minutes to over one hour. Informed consent was obtained from adult participants prior to each interview. Informed parental consent and informed assent was obtained from the child who participated. All identifying information has been removed from the report and names have been changed in all case studies to ensure participants' privacy and protection from potential retaliation.

Limitations

The findings are not a representative sample of the experiences of everyone in Cambodia.

Children aged under 18 years old were largely excluded from the research, despite them likely being at high risk of online harassment, due to challenges gaining parental consent prior to children's survey participation. These challenges were heightened by COVID-19 precautions, which stopped LICADHO from meeting with groups of children and their parents directly. Further research is necessary to understand children's experiences of online harassment in Cambodia.

The survey was only accessible to people with a high level of literacy and internet access through a device such as a phone or laptop. This likely contributed to the overrepresentation of people living in urban areas among the survey respondents. Groups unable to access the survey have likely also experienced online harassment, and further research using other methodologies would add to our understanding of online harassment in Cambodia.

Who Participated in the Survey ?



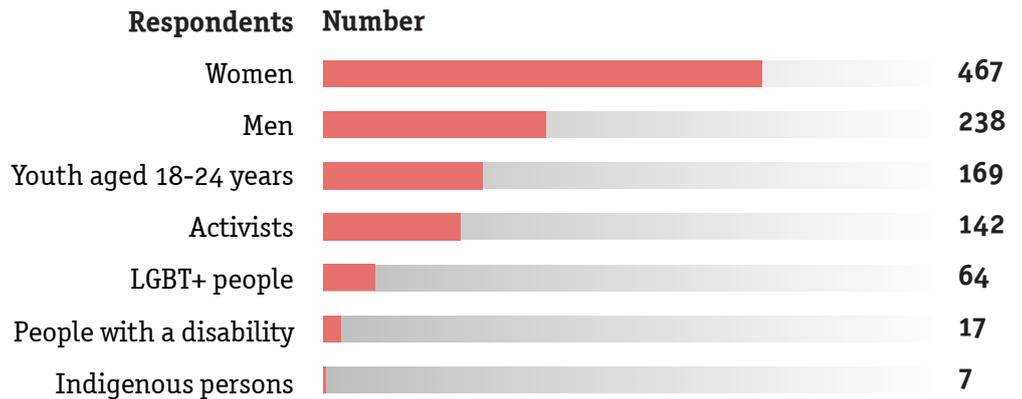
Among the 718 survey respondents, most are women and live in cities or urban areas (see Figures 2 and 3). Respondents were aged 18 to over 60, with the majority in their twenties and thirties (see Figure 4). Respondents reported more than 20 occupations or livelihoods, with many reporting more than one occupation (see Table 1).

Twenty percent of respondents are activists, including those who self-identified as human rights defenders, trade union leaders, civil society leaders, land activists, environmental activists, and/or political activists (see Figure 5). Nine percent of respondents identified as LGBT+ (see Figure 6).

Figure 1: Summary of survey respondents

718

Survey Respondents



One respondent may belong to multiple groups

Figure 2: Survey respondents by gender

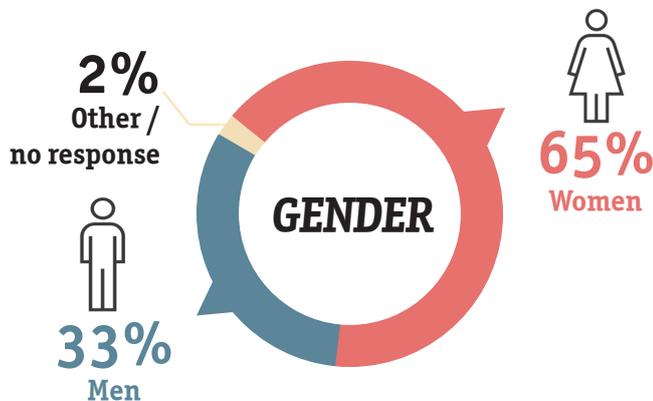
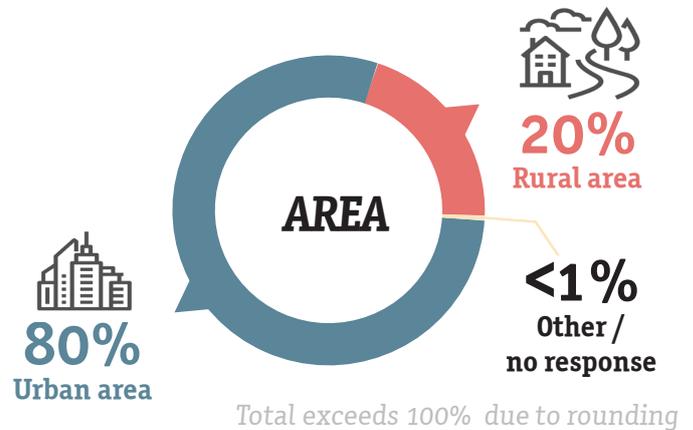
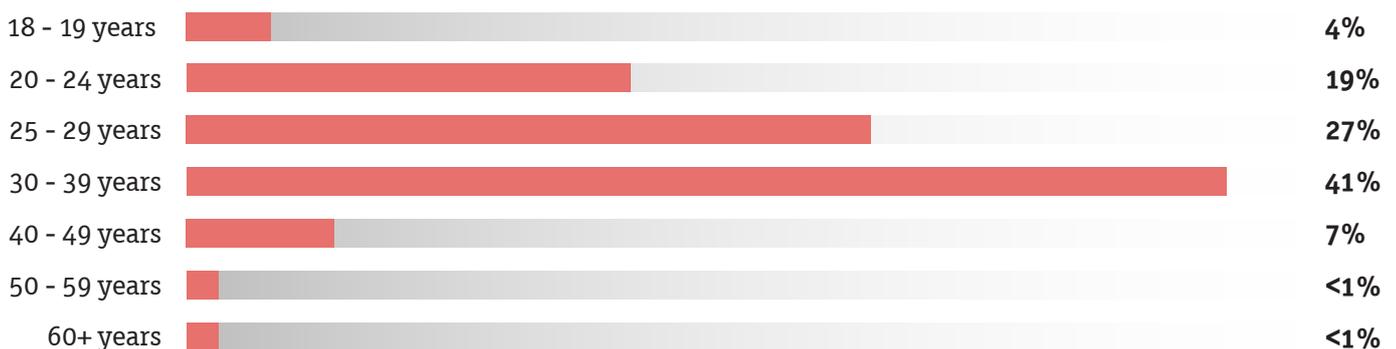


Figure 3: Survey respondents by location



Total exceeds 100% due to rounding

Figure 4: Survey respondents by age groups



Remaining respondents did not respond to this question

Figure 5: Survey respondents by type of activist



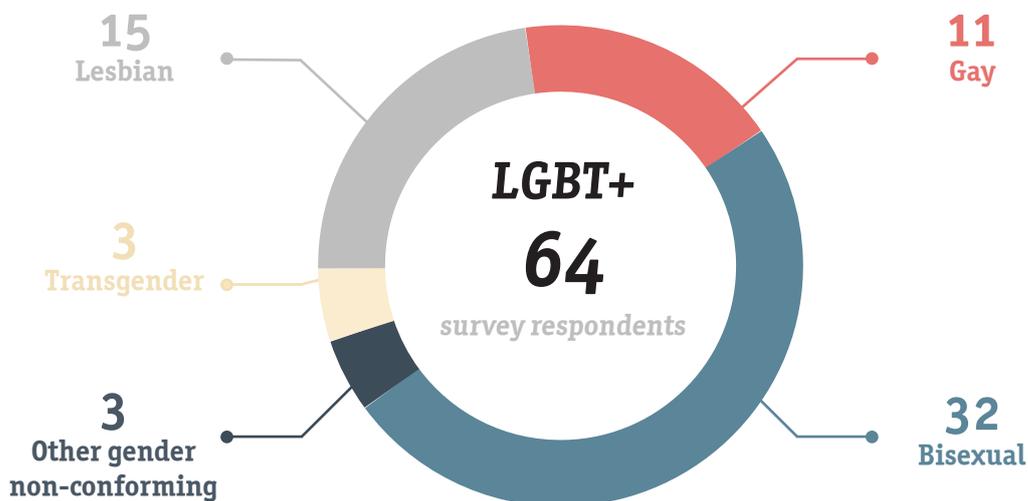
One respondent may belong to multiple groups

Table 1: Survey respondents by most reported occupation

| Occupation | No. of respondents | Percentage of respondents |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Private company | 430 | 60% |
| Student | 103 | 14% |
| NGO worker | 71 | 10% |
| Factory worker | 28 | 4% |
| Driver | 27 | 4% |
| Homemaker, care giver, or parent | 23 | 3% |
| Food or service | 20 | 3% |
| Farmer / agriculture | 19 | 3% |
| Vendor | 16 | 2% |
| Teacher | 12 | 2% |
| Entertainment services | 9 | 1% |
| Domestic worker | 9 | 1% |
| Online seller | 8 | 1% |
| Civil service / government | 8 | 1% |
| Unemployed | 8 | 1% |
| Tourism sector | 5 | <1% |
| Journalist | 5 | <1% |
| Construction worker | 4 | <1% |
| Other | 35 | 5% |

One respondent may have reported multiple occupations

Figure 6: LGBT+ survey respondents by sexual orientation / gender identity

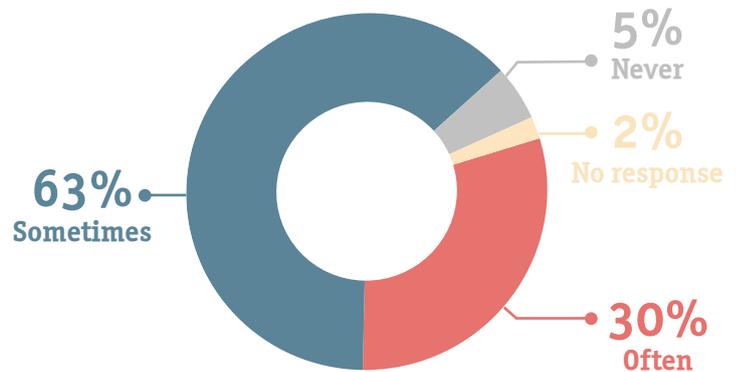


Social media is important to people's lives

People use social media often and for multiple reasons, which raises the cost of logging off or quitting social media due to online harassment. Nearly one in three respondents post or share content often (see Figure 7).¹⁶

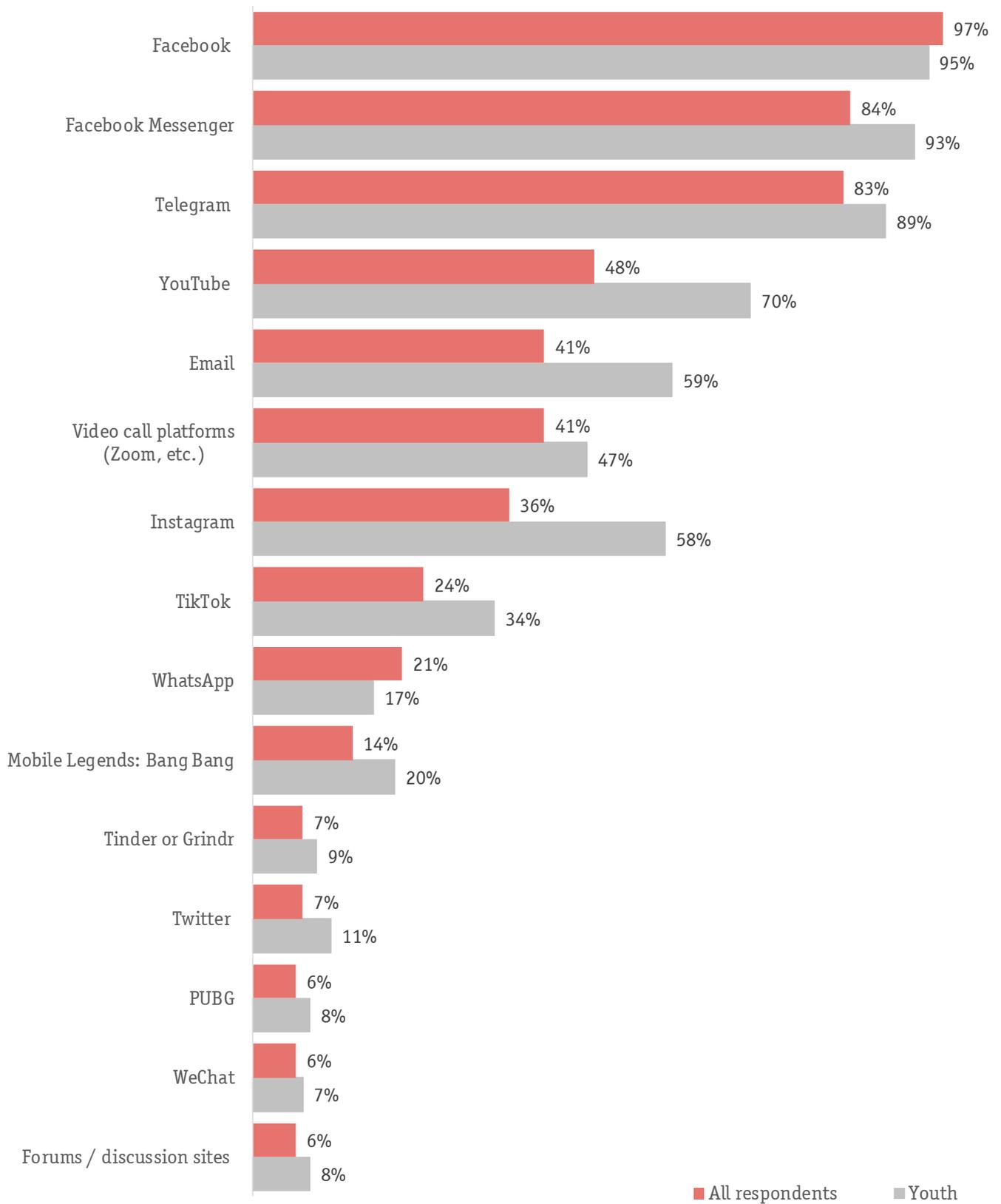
Almost all respondents report regularly using Facebook, Messenger, and Telegram, but other platforms are also popular. Smaller numbers of respondents report regularly playing games, such as Mobile Legends: Bang Bang and PUBG, or using dating sites such as Tinder or Grindr. Youth especially reported the importance of social media (see Figures 8 and 9).

Figure 7: Survey respondents by frequency of posting or sharing content on social media



¹⁶ Throughout the survey, respondents were able to self-define terms such as 'often', 'sometimes' and 'never' to reflect what they personally consider significant.

Figure 8: Survey respondents by regular use of social media platforms

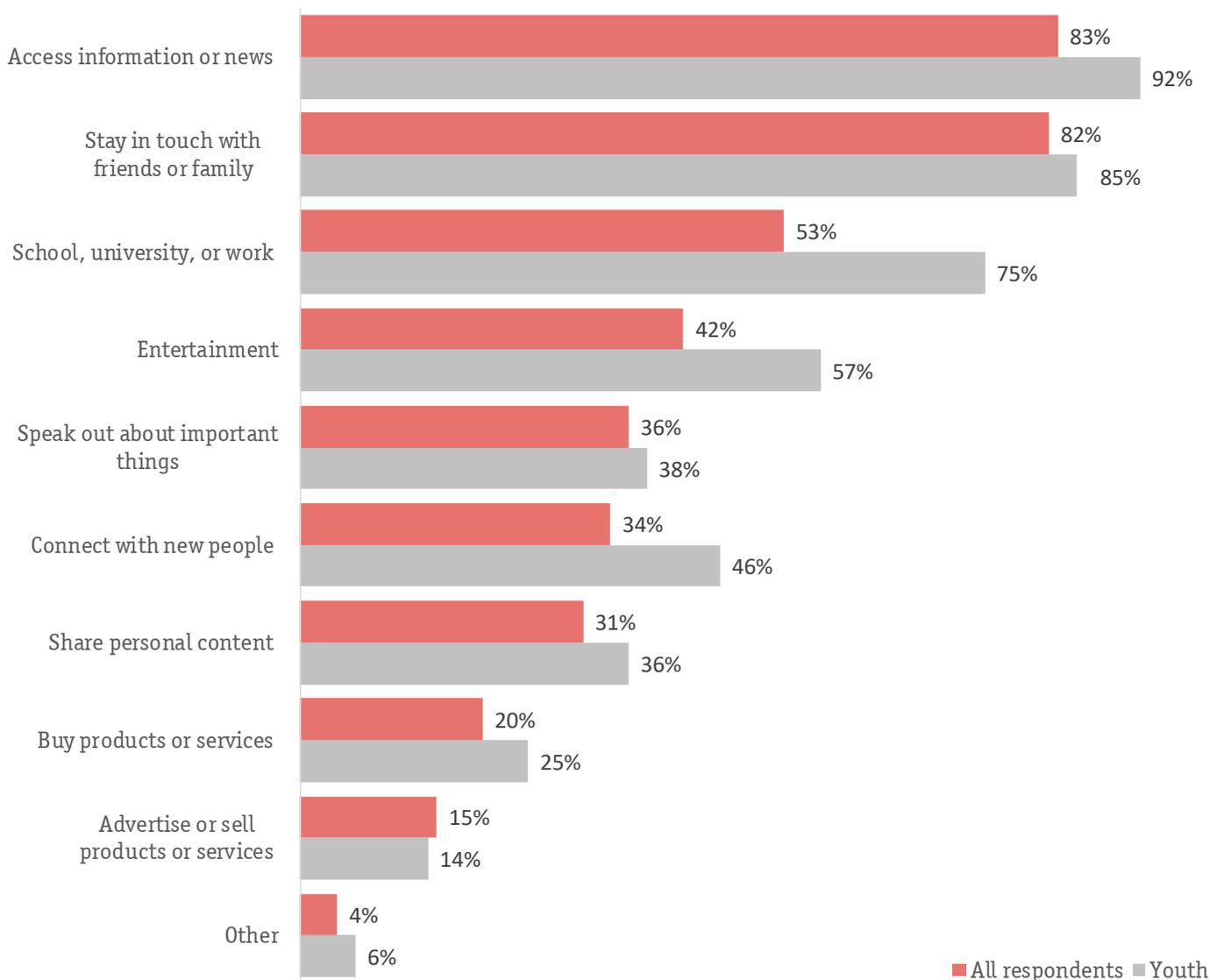


Multiple answers permitted, question not mandatory

Eighty-one percent of respondents reported that they use social media for more than one reason. The most common reason was to access information or read the news, especially for youth. This is particularly important given the restricted space for free press and the government’s stranglehold on traditional forms of media, such as newspapers and television.¹⁷ Other common reasons for social media use were to stay in touch with friends and

family, and for school, university, or work (see Figure 9). Thirty-six percent of respondents reported using social media to speak out about things that are important to them, but 48% of men do so in comparison to just 30% of women. Respondents also reported using social media to engage in important economic activities, such as buying, selling, or advertising products or services.

Figure 9: Survey respondents by reasons for social media use



Multiple answers permitted, question not mandatory

¹⁷ Cambodia ranks 144 out of 180 countries in “2021 World Press Freedom Index”, Reporters Without Borders, available at: <https://rsf.org/en/cambodia>; see also “Cambodian Journalism Situation Report 2020”, Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association, 2021, available at: <https://www.camboja.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Cambodian-Journalism-Situation-Report-2020.pdf>.



"I use social media to share information with others and to learn from others."

– Man in his thirties

"I use social media because I want to learn about society ... and because I need to do research for my study ... now I post information related to protection against COVID-19."

– Woman in her twenties



"I used to work in a casino but they have closed since February because of COVID-19. Now I am selling bags, shoes, and clothes online."

– Woman in her twenties

"I use it to share information with the public and society so they know what is happening in this area ... The problems in my community are land issues, human rights violations, illegal logging, restrictions on rights and freedoms..."

– Man in his twenties



"During this online period, life depends on social media for both learning at school and learning from organisations."

– Man in his twenties

"I mostly like to use Facebook ... I use it with close friends and family ... I post about my work because I write my own blog."

– Woman in her thirties



"I use it to communicate with friends abroad. And I want to run an online business selling face cream. I have just started."

– Woman in her thirties

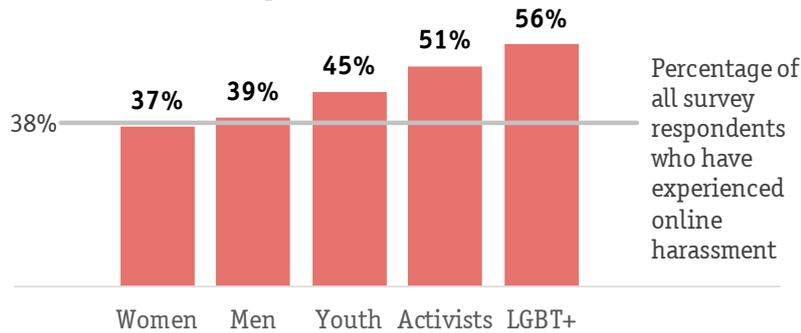
"When I see any problem, I like to share and post about it."

– Woman in her twenties



Online harassment is common

Figure 10: Percentage of each survey group who have experienced online harassment

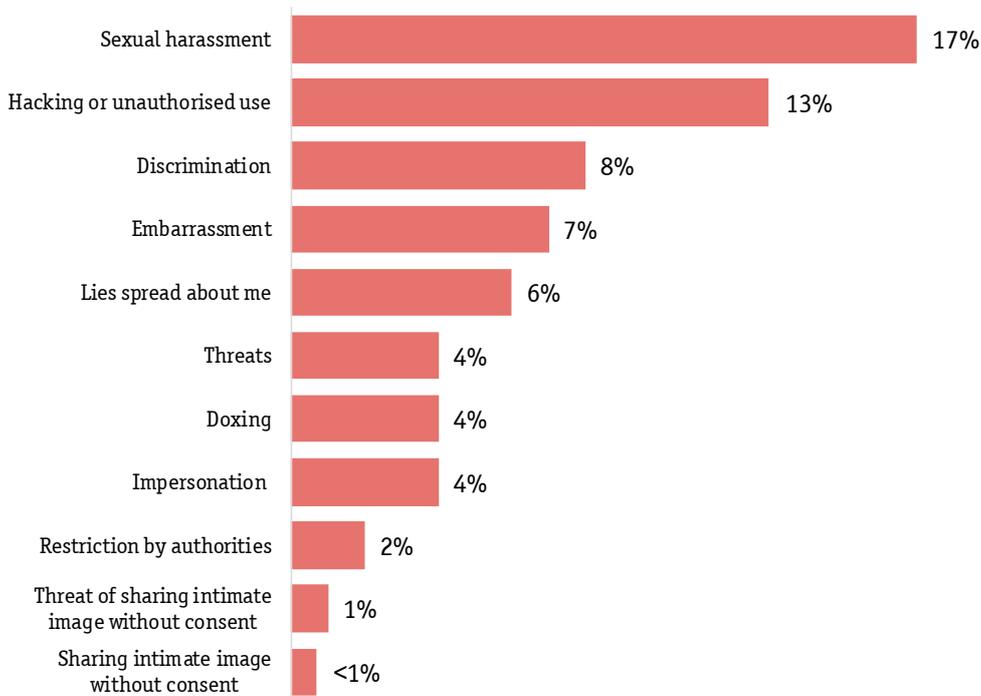


Thirty-eight percent of survey respondents (273 people) believe that they have faced online harassment and/or reported experiencing at least one type of online harassment (see 'What is Online Harassment?'). LGBT+ people, activists, and youth reported even higher rates of online harassment (see Figure 10). Women and men reported online harassment at roughly equal rates, but the type and impact of online harassment that respondents of each gender faced were often different, as shown in the findings.

Of the respondents who have experienced online harassment, 67% reported having faced it more than once

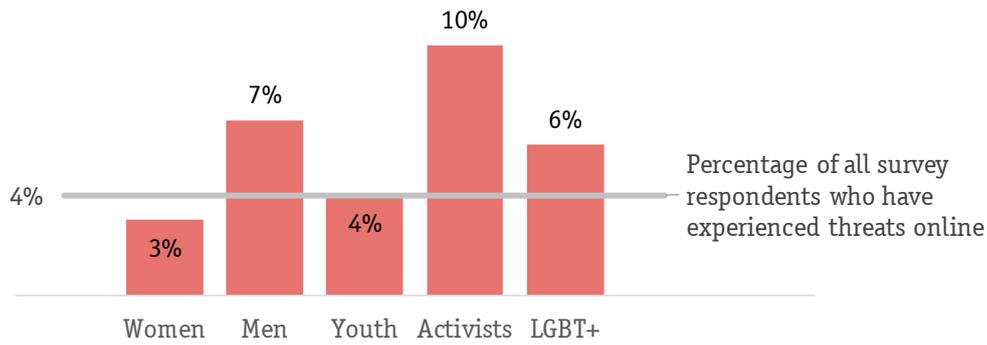
and 40% reported having faced it on multiple platforms or sites. Thirty-eight percent of respondents who have experienced online harassment first experienced it within the last two years, suggesting that online harassment is a growing problem. Receiving unsolicited sexual messages, photographs, videos, or requests was the most reported type of online harassment. It was followed by hacking or unauthorised use of an account, discrimination, and intentional embarrassment (see Figure 11 and Annex 1 for a disaggregated breakdown of the types of online harassment reported by survey participants).

Figure 11: Percentage of survey respondents who have experienced different types of online harassment



Multiple answers permitted, question not mandatory

Figure 12: Percentage of each group who have experienced threats online



Of the 30 respondents who reported being threatened online, 19 reported being threatened more than once. They reported death threats, threats of physical and sexual violence, economic threats, and other threats (see Table 2). Activists reported being threatened more often than other survey respondents (see Figure 12). This research did not ask questions specifically about online scams, but they were raised as a concern by 11 survey participants and two interviewees.

Fifty-four percent of all respondents reported that they have seen someone else experience online harassment. Among this group, 86% have seen a woman experience online harassment and 26% have seen a man experience online harassment, with some respondents witnessing multiple people experience online harassment. Even higher rates of youth – 63% – reported witnessing other people being subjected to online harassment.

While further research is needed to understand children’s experiences of online harassment, some respondents aged 20-24 years reported that they first experienced online

harassment up to 10 years earlier (when they were ages 10-14 years). Some respondents aged 18-19 years reported online harassment up to four years earlier (when they were ages 14-15 years).

Table 2: Number of survey respondents who have experienced different types of online threats

| Type of threat | No. of respondents | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-----|-------|
| | Women | Men | Total |
| Death threats | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| Threats of physical violence | 2 | 6 | 8 |
| Threats of sexual violence | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Economic threats | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| Other threats | 9 | 3 | 12 |

One person may have reported multiple types of threat



Facebook-owned platforms are the leading sites of online harassment

Ninety-five percent of survey respondents who reported experiencing online harassment experienced such harassment on at least one service owned by Facebook, including Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Many people reported experiencing online harassment on more than one platform or site. The most reported sites of online harassment were Facebook and Messenger followed by Telegram. Smaller percentages of respondents reported online harassment on platforms such as Mobile Legends: Bang Bang, Instagram, and WhatsApp, among others (see Table 3).



Table 3: Number of survey respondents who have experienced online harassment on different social media platforms

| Platform | No. of respondents | Percentage of respondents who have experienced online harassment |
|---|--------------------|--|
| Facebook | 221 | 81% |
| Messenger | 196 | 72% |
| Telegram | 58 | 21% |
| Mobile Legends: Bang Bang | 26 | 10% |
| Instagram | 21 | 8% |
| WhatsApp | 21 | 8% |
| Email | 19 | 7% |
| PUBG | 17 | 6% |
| Tinder | 15 | 5% |
| Video call platforms (Zoom, Skype, Jitsi, etc.) | 12 | 4% |
| TikTok | 5 | 2% |
| YouTube | 5 | 2% |
| Grindr | 5 | 2% |
| Forums or discussion sites | 3 | 1% |
| WeChat | 3 | 1% |
| Twitter | 1 | <1% |

Multiple answers permitted, question not mandatory

“ I thought he turned on the phone flash ... I did not allow him to take the video ... My friends saw my account send the video for everyone to see.”

Sophal,¹⁸ a 16-year-old girl studying in Grade 9, has faced severe harassment via Facebook after a 24-year-old man discreetly filmed himself and Sophal having sex. Sophal consented to having sex,¹⁹ but she was filmed without her knowledge or consent.

When Sophal declined the man's requests to meet again, he posted the video both from his own Facebook account and Sophal's. She does not know how he accessed her account, but the video was sent to her friends, posted in large public group chats with names such as '18+', and shared as Facebook posts. She was alerted to it when friends started calling her. "They said I am so bad for sending pornographic photographs to others," she said. "I felt nervous because I was afraid my mother would hear."

The video spread widely, and Sophal's mother was informed by their neighbour. The family went to the police. In the presence of police, the perpetrator's family repeatedly suggested that Sophal and the 24-year-old man get married. Sophal and her family rejected the suggestion. The police knew that this man had perpetrated the same offence before and that the first time he had married the woman before they later divorced.

The perpetrator was convicted in absentia and found guilty of violation of privacy (recording of a person's image).²⁰ He was sentenced to one year in prison and ordered to pay 20 million riel (US\$5,000) in civil compensation. He has not been detained at any stage of proceedings or paid the compensation owed. The sentence is light in comparison to other charges he could have faced, such as producing and distributing child pornography, which carries a sentence of 10 to 20 years.²¹ "When I go somewhere I am afraid to meet him again," Sophal said. "I do not even dare see his face."

This online harassment was a leading factor in Sophal's recent decision to change schools, where her new friends do not know about the video. Sophal has also faced backlash from her community. "Some people said that I am a girl who goes around [at night] and only brings embarrassment," she said. "When I walk by my neighbours' houses, I try to walk by normally no matter what they say."

Sophal found the process of reporting a video to Facebook too confusing, and she does not know if the video is still circulating online, even though she has not seen it recently. Sophal now cautiously uses a new Facebook account.

When asked if Sophal thought the outcome was fair, she replied, "Not yet, because he still has not been detained and the compensation has not been paid". Sophal remains hopeful for the future. She looks forward to opening her own salon after finishing school.

¹⁸ Name has been changed to ensure participant's privacy and protection from potential retaliation.

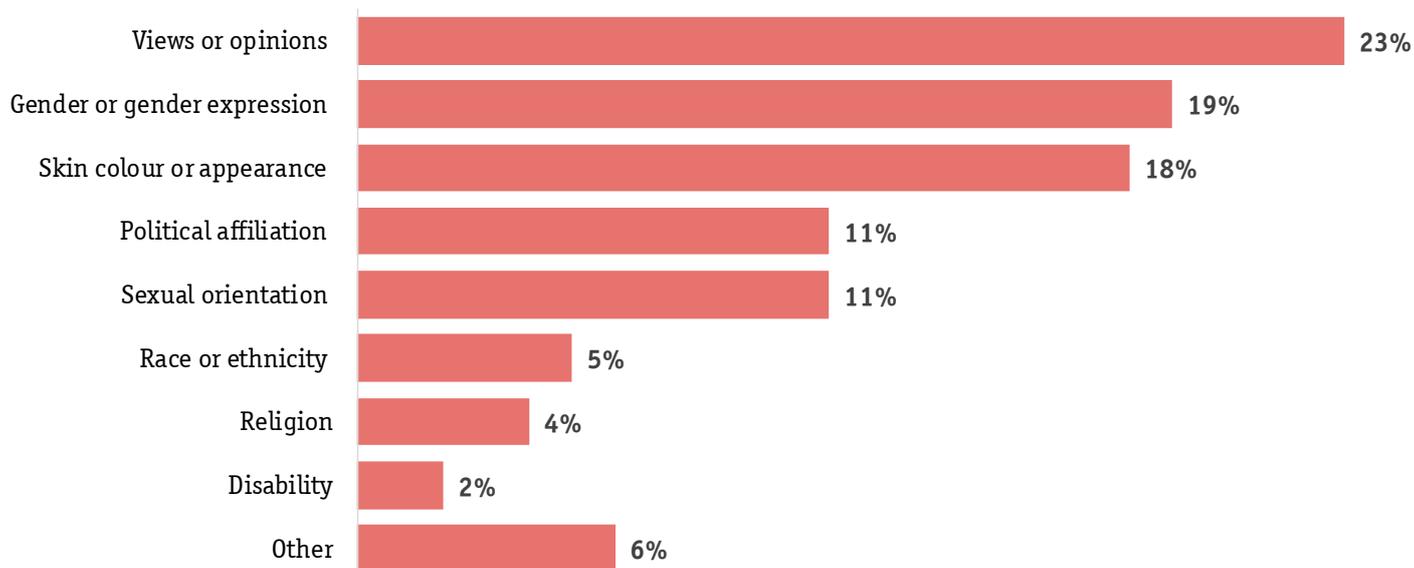
¹⁹ The legal age of consent in Cambodia is 15 years old. Article 239, Criminal Code

²⁰ Article 302, Criminal Code

²¹ Article 40-41, Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

People are being targeted for what they think and who they are

Figure 13: Percentage of survey respondents who have experienced online harassment who believe it was connected to their beliefs, physical appearance, and / or identities

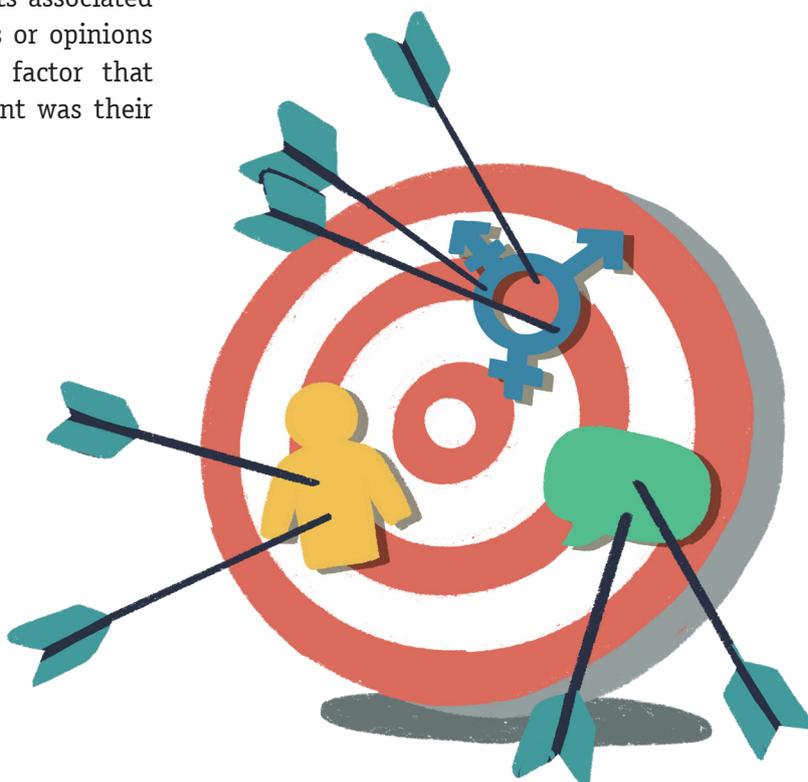


Multiple answers permitted, question not mandatory

People who have experienced online harassment reported being targeted for what they think (such as their views, opinions, and political affiliations) and who they are (such as their gender, appearance, and sexual orientation) (see Figure 13).

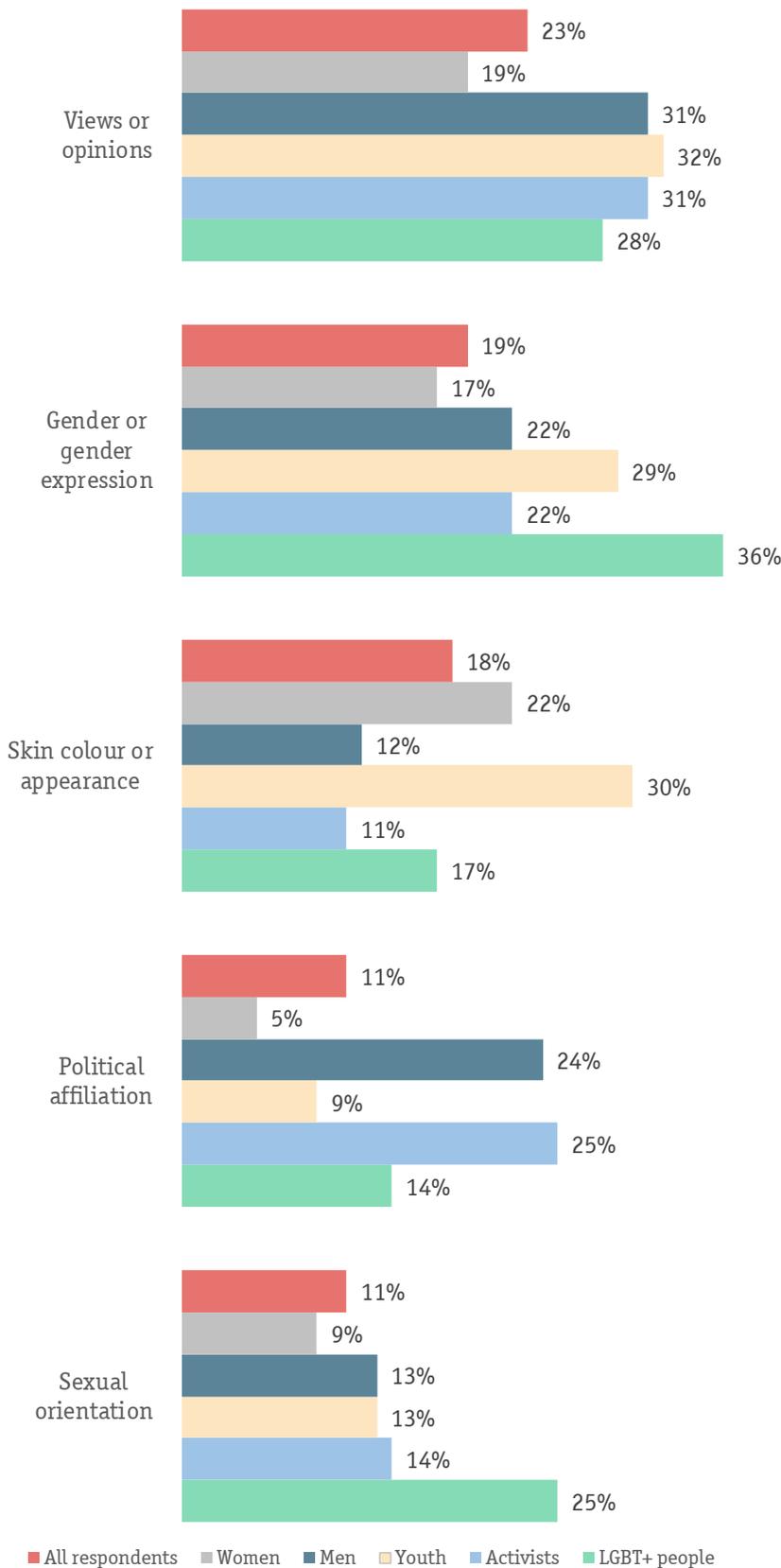
All groups reported high rates of online harassment in connection to their views or opinions. The leading factors that men and activist respondents associated with online harassment were their views or opinions and political affiliations. The leading factor that women associated with online harassment was their

skin colour or appearance.²² LGBT+ people most often reported online harassment in connection to their gender or gender expression and a quarter of this group felt online harassment was connected to their sexual orientation. Youth often reported online harassment in connection to their skin colour or appearance, gender, or gender expression (see Figure 14).



²² Mainstream beauty standards in Cambodia hold fairer and whiter skin as more attractive, resulting in widespread colourism and discrimination. This discrimination affects people within the same racial or ethnic group, as well as across racial and ethnic groups.

Figure 14: Percentage of each group by the most common factors they believe were connected to online harassment



Multiple answers permitted, question not mandatory

“Others look down and discriminate against us.”

Channy,²³ a 20-year-old woman, is committed to sharing her indigenous culture online but she has often been harassed for it. “I mostly like to share about my indigenous people’s culture,” she said. “Some people use rude words and comment, ‘I do not know why you would want to share this. Nobody wants to know this’ . . . It hurts my feelings.”

Channy once shared a photograph on Facebook of herself at a ceremony in her village. A stranger edited the photograph to make Channy look like a witch and re-posted it from his Facebook account in an accusation that she was possessed by spirits. He then messaged Channy to demand money for him to remove the post. “He damaged my reputation,” Channy said. Such accusations are often dangerous; in recent years people in Cambodia have been murdered over suspicions of witchcraft.²⁴

Channy went to her father and commune officials for help. They identified the perpetrator who apologised online and participated in a ceremony to stop him from behaving that way again. Channy felt the outcome was fair, but she has created a new Facebook account and uses social media less now.

“I am still afraid to share or post anything,” she said. Her message to others is clear: “Please do not discriminate online”.

²³ Name has been changed to ensure participant’s privacy and protection from potential retaliation.

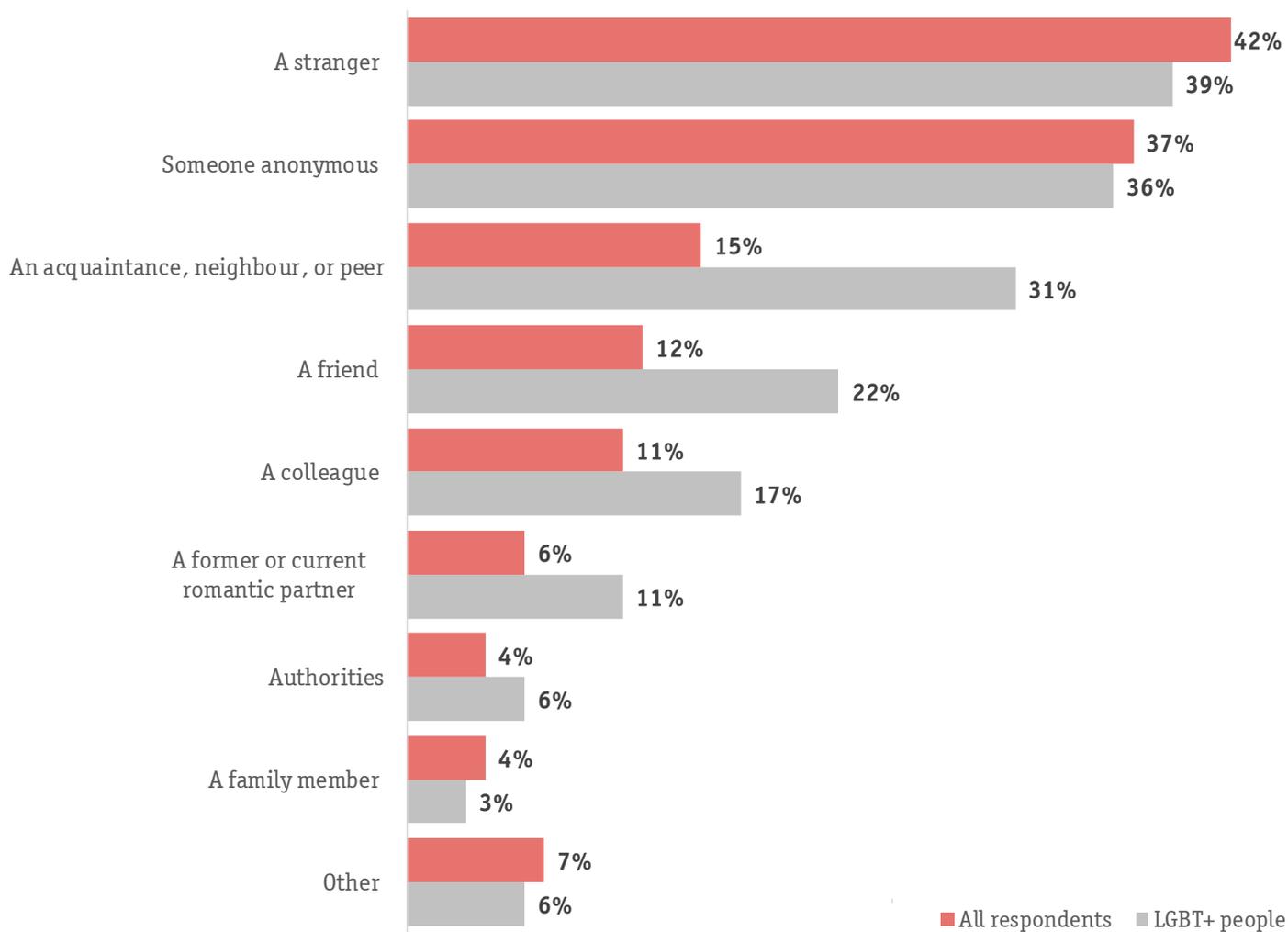
²⁴ Between 2012 and 2018, a UN report documented 49 witchcraft-related cases of which 35 involved killings and 14 attempted killings or harassment. “People’s Court: Preventing and Responding to “Popular Justice” in Cambodia”, OHCHR, p. 10, 2019, available at: <https://cambodia.ohchr.org/en/content/peoples-court-preventing-and-responding-%E2%80%9Cpopular-justice%E2%80%9D-cambodia>

Perpetrators are often strangers or anonymous, and believed to be mostly men

Many survey respondents reported online harassment by multiple people, particularly strangers and/or anonymous users. Women were more likely than men to be targeted by strangers or someone anonymous; 51% of women respondents who have experienced online harassment reported online harassment by a stranger compared to 26% of men respondents, while 41% of women who have experienced online harassment reported online

harassment by someone anonymous compared to 28% of men. In contrast, LGBT+ people were more likely to be targeted by someone they know (see Figure 15). This might reflect broader harmful attitudes that bullying and harassment of LGBT+ people is acceptable; for example, one study found that over 60% of LGBT+ children surveyed in Cambodia were bullied in school.²⁵

Figure 15: Percentage of survey respondents who have experienced online harassment by perpetrators' relationship to them



Multiple answers permitted, question not mandatory

²⁵ "LGBT Bullying in Cambodia's Schools", Cambodian Center for Human Rights, p. 16, 2015, available at: https://cchrcambodia.org/index_old.php?url=media/media.php&p=report_detail.php&reid=110&id=5

“They said that if you continue [to post], it will affect your safety.”

Dara²⁶ is an active trade unionist and regularly posts online about social and human rights issues. In recent years, he has faced sustained online harassment from an anonymous Facebook user whose profile has since disappeared. “Whenever I posted or shared information about human rights violations or abuse, that profile always commented,” he said. “His comments were mostly to stop us by threatening us.”

The anonymous account first posted two photographs side by side. The first was a photograph of Dara taken from his Facebook account and the second was a photograph of a gun. Dara recalls that the post disappeared a day later. The anonymous user then began relentlessly commenting on Dara’s posts, demanding that Dara stop sharing information. Dara estimates that he received comments on 50 to 100 of his posts.

Dara also received an anonymous phone call during which someone told him to stop posting information. Dara thinks the caller and anonymous Facebook user are the same person because they used similar words. Dara also reported being physically stalked. “He knows about our business, where we are, he knows everything. I think that he is not far away, and he is skilled with technology because he knows where I am,” he said.

Dara tried to block the user but was unsuccessful. “I asked an expert who knows how to block people but I still could not block him,” Dara said. “I was not his [Facebook] friend, but he could comment [on my posts]. When I checked his profile, I saw that he is [Facebook] friends with high-ranking officers,” he said.

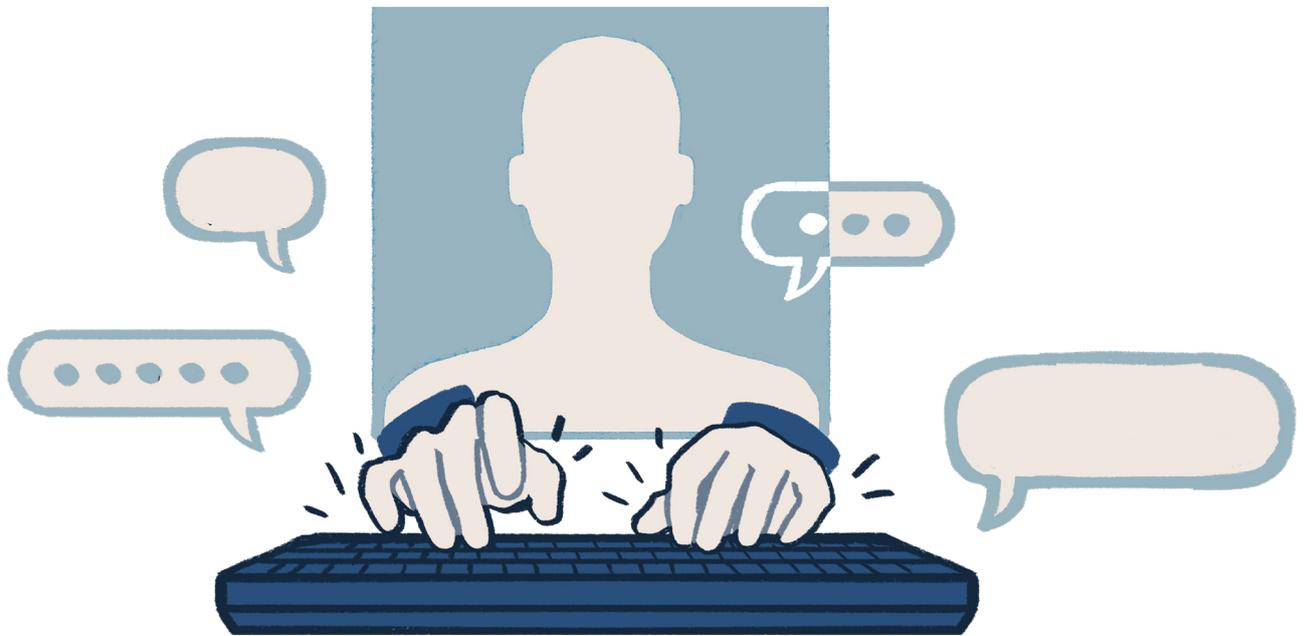
Dara also knows that the monitoring of his Facebook posts goes further. A local authority once warned Dara not to post information related to politics and to be careful. Dara is not afraid and continues to speak out about important issues, but he worries that others might witness the harassment and stop posting themselves.

“Suddenly they just took a photograph of me without my permission.”

Leak,²⁷ a 26-year-old woman, was at a mini-mart buying a drink when a group of approximately four male strangers took a photograph of her. A stranger later messaged her on Telegram to tell her that her photograph had been shared in a Telegram group and that people were talking about her. The men from the mart soon started adding her on Facebook, but she denied their friend requests. Because Leak could not access the Telegram group, she could not verify if her photograph was still being shared despite being told that it had been deleted. Leak also did not know how the men had found her on Telegram and Facebook. “I do not know,” she said. “I just felt scared and did not understand. I do not know what they said about the photograph and why suddenly . . . they used my photograph like that.”

²⁶ Name has been changed to ensure participant’s privacy and protection from potential retaliation.

²⁷ Name has been changed to ensure participant’s privacy and protection from potential retaliation.



Perpetrators are sometimes well-known to the person targeted. One woman in her early twenties shared that her ex-boyfriend maliciously used her account. “He used my account and took screenshots of my messages with other people and posted them on my account. It scared me and made me feel ashamed,” she said. Another woman in her thirties shared that her ex-boyfriend created a fake Facebook account using photographs from her own account to try to control her. “He did not want us to break up,” she recalled. “Maybe he just wanted to threaten me to make me stay with him.”

Respondents reported that men perpetrated online harassment more often than women. In instances where the perpetrator was a stranger or anonymous, respondents may have assumed the perpetrator’s gender based on their online presence. Of the people who reported online harassment, 65% of respondents believed that they were targeted by a man, and 23% believed that they were targeted by a woman; some reported harassment by multiple people of different genders, while others were unsure of the perpetrators’ gender (see Table 4).

Table 4: Perpetrators’ gender as reported by the survey respondents who have experienced online harassment

| Perpetrator’s gender | No. of respondents |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Man | 177 |
| Woman | 64 |
| Other | 8 |
| Do not know | 55 |

Multiple answers permitted, question not mandatory

“ They still keep messaging other people, especially women. ”

Vanna,²⁸ a 23-year-old student, uses social media to communicate with friends and read the news. She experienced doxing when her phone number was maliciously shared in a large group chat by a friend of a friend. “They wanted to mistreat me, and they shared it with bad people,” she said.

Vanna blocked her friend and the man that had shared her phone number, but she had already started receiving calls from unknown numbers. She ignored the calls but men she did not know started contacting her through Facebook Messenger. “They used inappropriate [sexual] words. I did not respond to them and then I just blocked them,” she said. “I felt unsafe.”

²⁸ Name has been changed to ensure participant’s privacy and protection from potential retaliation.

The Cambodian government surveils and harasses activists and others to repress online freedom of expression

The Cambodian government routinely harasses and imprisons environmental and human rights defenders, political opponents, journalists, and regular social media users for their online expression. This harassment is enabled by the government's excessive and unchecked surveillance powers. Online harassment by authorities was reported by 4% of all respondents and 11% of activists. Fourteen survey respondents (11 of whom are men, while 8 identify as activists) specifically reported that authorities reacted to something they posted online by summoning them for questioning, asking them to remove a post, or to apologise.

While not captured as part of this research, there are many publicly known cases in which government actors have arrested, convicted and imprisoned people for their

online speech. Vague provisions of the Criminal Code, particularly incitement to commit a felony (Articles 494 and 495), public insult (Article 307), and insulting the King (Article 437-bis) are often used by Cambodia's judiciary to imprison people for their online expression. Authorities have also revoked licences of media outlets because of their online reporting.²⁹ In 2020, LICADHO documented arrests of 158 Cambodians (34 women and 124 men) due to their online expression. By the end of the year, 73 of those people remained in prison. Social media content, including private communication, is often the only evidence presented in trials.

For example, in May 2021 environmental activists Long Kunthea, Phuon Keoraksmeay, and Thun Ratha were convicted for alleged incitement. The only 'evidence'



²⁹ For example, see "The Fight for Freedom: Attacks on Human Rights Defenders 2018-2020", LICADHO, 2020, available at: <https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/reports.php?perm=233>

presented during the trial was their Facebook posts and videos calling for environmental protection. They were sentenced to between 18 and 20 months in prison, with two other activists convicted in absentia. Parts of their sentences were suspended by the Phnom Penh Appeal Court in November, after they had spent more than a year in prison. The three face additional plotting charges alongside three other activists, Sun Ratha, Yim Leanghy, and Ly Chandaravuth, who were arrested and charged in June. Sun Ratha and Leanghy also face additional charges of insulting the King. Government-aligned media outlet Fresh News released a most-likely illegally recorded video of their participation in a private Zoom meeting, which the outlet failed to source and labelled as 'evidence'. The six activists were released on bail in November but continue to face up to 10 years in prison if convicted.³⁰

Similarly, in June 2021, a then 16-year-old boy with autism spectrum disorder was detained over messages sent via Telegram and Facebook posts. His father, a former opposition member and activist, is also detained. Prior to the boy's arrest, his mother routinely demonstrated for his father's release. In November 2021, after spending more than four months in pre-trial detention, the boy was convicted of incitement and insult of public officials and sentenced to eight months in prison. He served a sentence of four months and 15 days in prison, with the remainder suspended, but he remains under probation with numerous conditions for two additional years.³¹

Not only does the government imprison vocal online critics, it has also engaged in online smear campaigns to harass them. In June 2020, the monk and internationally recognised human rights defender Venerable Luon Savath was targeted in a smear campaign using falsified Facebook accounts, videos, and audio. An investigation by The New York Times found that employees of the government's propaganda arm, the Press and Quick Reaction Unit, were

involved in creating and posting the falsified videos on Facebook. While Facebook did remove the fake page, it took more than a month to do so.³² The monk left the country and was convicted in absentia and defrocked in absentia by a government-controlled monk council.

This context has resulted in wider self-censorship. One woman journalist interviewed for this research reflected that the government had summoned human rights defenders for sharing their ideas on Facebook, before concluding, "I do not write any stories that are too sensitive". A man in his twenties commented, "I can only talk about small issues now because the authorities restrict freedom of expression". A student in her twenties shared, "Any post about community activities is followed and banned by the authorities".

Recently passed laws are likely to restrict online free expression even further.³³ The 2015 Law on Telecommunication enables unchecked surveillance powers and criminalisation of expression. The 2018 Inter-Ministerial Prakas No. 170 on Publication Controls of Website and Social Media Processing via Internet in the Kingdom of Cambodia provides vague and broad grounds on which online content can be blocked and assigns three ministries to monitor websites and social media. In January 2021, a Ministry of Information official told a local media outlet that it would be extending its monitoring capabilities to include TikTok and private messaging platforms WhatsApp, Messenger, and Telegram.³⁴ In February, the Sub-Decree on the Establishment of National Internet Gateway was signed and will be implemented by early 2022. The gateway, through which all internet connections will pass, will provide the means for the government to control and restrict all online traffic, block online content, and enhance surveillance. Cambodia's draft Cybercrime Law poses further risks to freedom of expression and the right to privacy if enacted.

³⁰ See "Drop All Charges Against Mother Nature Activists, Release Imprisoned Rights Activists", Joint Statement, 22 June 2021, available at: <https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/pressrelease.php?perm=479>

³¹ See "16-Year-Old with Autism Convicted over Facebook Posts, Telegram Messages", LICADHO, 2021, available at: <https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/flashnews.php?perm=296>

³² See Hannah Beech and Sun Narin, "Threatened by Facebook Disinformation a Monk Flees Cambodia", The New York Times, 23 August 2020, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/23/world/asia/cambodia-facebook-disinformation.html>

³³ For an in-depth discussion of relevant laws see "Internet Freedoms in Cambodia: A Gateway to Control", Asia Centre, 2021, available at: <https://asiacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/Internet-Freedoms-in-Cambodia-A-Gateway-to-Control.pdf>; "People-Watching: Censorship, Surveillance, and the National Internet Gateway in Cambodia", Digital Reach, 2021, available at: <https://digitalreach.asia/news/online-people-watching-censorship-surveillance-and-the-national-internet-gateway-in-cambodia/>

³⁴ See Sar Socheat, "Information Ministry to expand monitoring on social media", Khmer Times, 28 January 2021, available at: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50807854/information-ministry-to-expand-monitoring-on-social-media/>

“ We do not use [Facebook] to talk about rights abuses too much because we are afraid they will be strict. ”

Piseth,³⁵ a unionist, has been relentlessly harassed for his work and online speech. He used to post about labour rights, politics, land grabbing, and human rights violations but now he only shares personal content.

When Piseth called for justice for imprisoned activists, a high-ranking military official called to meet with him. During the meeting, which spanned several hours, Piseth was shocked at the detailed information they knew about him, which he believed they obtained from both his private messaging conversations and his Facebook posts. “I think they search using technology and Facebook,” he said. “They know everything. They know my work background.” During the meeting, he was warned not to overstep undefined boundaries regarding his work and online posts. “They said even if I go anywhere or hide . . . they still know where I am.”

But Piseth experienced online harassment before that meeting. On at least three occasions, anonymous users contacted Piseth on Facebook Messenger and via direct phone calls, warning him to be careful. The messages disappeared several hours later. He has received several notifications that someone attempted to log in to his Facebook account. Piseth has also been followed by people on motorbikes who have waited outside his home or workplace. His employer, along with district and provincial authorities, have told him to stop speaking out at work.

This sustained harassment has heavily impacted Piseth’s social media use. “After coming back from meeting them ... I sat down and scrolled to delete some posts that could be used to pressure me,” he said. “When we saw that everyone was sharing information, we used to join to encourage the youth . . . but now we feel pressure . . . we imagine what will happen to our country and the next generation.”

“ They said if you are not going to delete [the post], I will file a complaint to the police. ”

Over the past decade, Ratha,³⁶ a 27-year-old farmer, has faced a long land dispute in which he has lost all but three hectares of his land to a powerful company. He has been a strong voice in efforts to defend his community’s land and has relied on Facebook to publicise the land rights abuses they face.

When Ratha attempted to document the destruction of the community’s land, authorities threatened him. “They threatened that if I dared to take a photograph or video of them and post it, they would arrest me and put me in prison,” Ratha shared.

Ratha also feels his posts are closely monitored by his village chief, who could report him to higher authorities. “If they find [any] mistake, they will take action against me,” he said. Ratha is undeterred by such threats. “When they threaten me, I still continue to film and post [on Facebook].”

³⁵ Name has been changed to ensure participant’s privacy and protection from potential retaliation.

³⁶ Name has been changed to ensure participant’s privacy and protection from potential retaliation.

Sexual harassment was the most reported type of online harassment



"A man who was a friend on [Facebook] but who I have never met sent me several naked photographs at night. I did not know what he wanted from it or understand why because we did not know each other at all."

– Heterosexual woman in her twenties

"I have had strangers send me pornography via Messenger. I cursed them and blocked them."

– Bisexual woman in her thirties



"I was afraid to reply in Messenger. They sent me bad photographs so I blocked them. I think they harassed me ... At that time, I set my profile picture to a photograph of a flower."

– Heterosexual woman in her twenties

"We never knew each other, but they chatted with me to have sex. I did not like it at all."

– Gay man in his twenties



"People just say hi, and I say hi back, and then they send those [sexual photographs] to me ... I do not like that kind of message. It is as if they do not think highly of me."

– Lesbian woman in her thirties

"Anonymous people sent me pornographic photographs ... Sometimes people send me messages after I post something. Their messages are a type of harassment, they want to tease or flirt with me."

– Heterosexual woman in her thirties



"Sometimes people send a direct message to me with bad photographs and inappropriate words ... Sometimes I do not put my own photograph as my profile picture so I do not receive messages like that."

– Heterosexual woman in her twenties

"A stranger sent me a pornographic video. It was immoral for that person to do that to me."

– Heterosexual woman in her twenties



"They chatted to ask where we work and if we want to go out with guests. They are brokers for the guests. They asked about our price and if for \$200 to \$300 we would sleep with the guests."

– Heterosexual woman in her twenties

"A friend on Facebook sent a normal message and then video called me. At first, I saw he was not wearing a shirt and I thought it was because it was hot but when he stood up, he was naked."

– Heterosexual woman in her thirties



"A stranger used an unknown Facebook account to send nude photographs via Messenger."

– Heterosexual woman in her forties

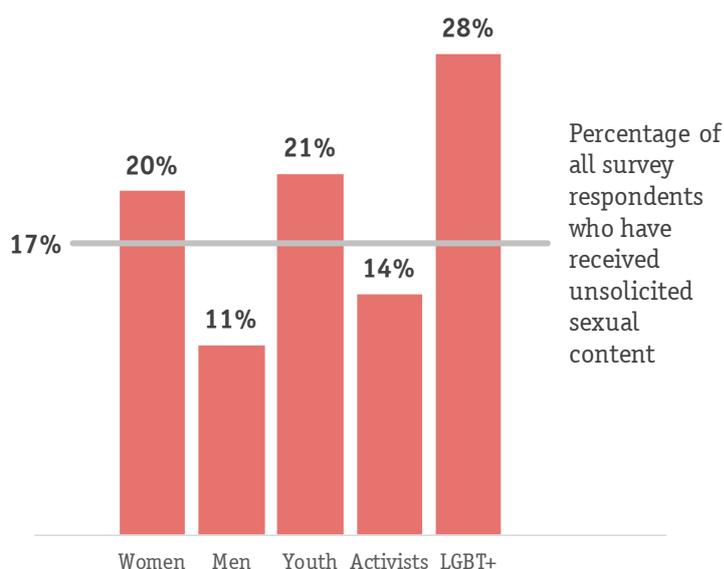
One in five women respondents reported receiving an unsolicited sexual message, photograph, video, or request. This jumped to 24% for women aged 18 to 24 years; LGBT+ respondents reported even higher rates of online sexual harassment (see Figure 16).

One woman in her thirties told LICADHO that she has frequently been targeted with online sexual harassment. “It traumatised me,” she shared. “I did not want to use [social media] anymore.”

Sixty-five percent of respondents who reported being sexually harassed online have experienced it more than once. Several interviewees shared that they have been targeted by both foreigners and Cambodians, but that they were targeted by foreigners more often. As discussed below, blocking perpetrators is a common coping mechanism but often insufficient. Online sexual harassment can also cross into offline violence. While not captured as part of this research, in the last year LICADHO has handled several rape cases in which the perpetrator first met a woman or child on Facebook.

Rather than address sexual harassment online, the Cambodian government has on several occasions harassed and imprisoned women for their clothing or speech choices on Facebook, violating their rights to bodily autonomy and freedom of expression and contributing to a broader culture of victim-blaming. In February 2020,

Figure 16: Percentage of each survey group who have received unsolicited sexual content



Prime Minister Hun Sen ordered a crackdown on women who sell products on social media who wear “sexy outfits” or clothing arbitrarily deemed too revealing, wrongly asserting that it can lead to sexual violence and trafficking and argued that it undermines traditional values and Khmer culture.³⁷ While not captured as a part of this research, local media and others have since reported on at least five women who have been summoned or imprisoned by authorities over clothing or expression on Facebook that was arbitrarily deemed too sexual or immodest.



- In February 2020, an online seller was imprisoned for photographs and videos of herself wearing “sexy clothes” which she posted to Facebook. She was convicted of charges related to pornography and indecent exposure,³⁸ before being released in May 2020.
- The same month, a transgender woman was imprisoned because of a video she sent via a private chat in which she offered sexual services. She was convicted on charges related to pornography,³⁹ before being released in June 2020. She did not have access to required medical care or hormone treatment in prison despite having recently undergone gender-affirming surgery.
- In February 2021, an online seller was summoned by the Phnom Penh Municipal Police for wearing “sexy” clothing and using “immoral words” on Facebook that “affect the honour and dignity of Cambodian women”. She was made to publicly apologise and sign a contract limiting her online expression.
- In March 2021, a police officer faced disciplinary action for posting a picture of herself nursing her baby while in uniform on her personal Facebook account. She was made to apologise for offending the dignity of women and her office and to sign a contract to discontinue her behaviour. Authorities only backtracked on this harassment after significant public outcry.
- In June 2021, local media reported that an online seller was arrested seemingly for sexually suggestive speech made in a Facebook video.

³⁷ See “Women’s Rights are Human Rights: Cambodia Needs to Respect Women’s Rights to Self Determination, Expression and Bodily Integrity”, Joint Open Letter, February 2020, available at: https://cchrcambodia.org/media/files/press_release/748_oltpwate_en.pdf

³⁸ Articles 38 and 39, Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation and Article 249, Criminal Code

³⁹ Articles 38 and 39, Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

This is rooted in widely accepted social gender norms in Cambodia, which confer upon men sexual and other entitlements, while creating expectations for women to be modest and submissive. While policing women's clothing currently has not been codified into law, a draft Public Order Law has articles dictating what can be worn in public.

Gender norms, victim-blaming, and sexual harassment are leading women to self-censor on social media. Several women who participated in this research felt that they could not have a photograph of themselves as their profile picture without being sexually harassed. As one woman in her thirties critiqued with frustration, "If you are wearing sexy clothes and you show it on your profile, the mistake ... is on the woman, it is not about man."



“ When he acted like that, it seems he did not value me. ”

Sophea,⁴⁰ a 23-year-old student, uses social media to share information and chat with people to practice English. Yet she often receives sexual messages that she does not want. One time, a Cambodian man added her on Facebook and began chatting. He soon sent sexual photographs and requests and asked to meet in person.

“First, I told him not to do that, it is not good, then I just blocked him,” said Sophea. “I just wanted to communicate with him as a normal friend.” Sophea did not meet him offline, but she reflected on the dangers others might face. She feels that blocking him has helped but she is not confident that it will stop him contacting her again.

Sophea has had similar experiences with foreigners, both men and a woman, who have shared sexual photographs of themselves before repeatedly asking for photographs of her. One time at school, Sophea's friend was using her phone when someone sent her a sexual photograph. Sophea felt that it made her friends judge her, even though she knows her friends have faced similar problems themselves. “It made me feel embarrassed when he sent that,” she said.

⁴⁰ Name has been changed to ensure participant's privacy and protection from potential retaliation.

Online harassment is pushing people off social media

Of the survey respondents who reported online harassment, 36% used social media less, stopped entirely or deleted their account as a result (see Figure 18). Women and youth were particularly likely to use social media less after being targeted with online harassment (see Figure 19).

Self-censorship is a common coping mechanism after experiencing online harassment. This ranges from women ensuring that they do not post a photograph of themselves on their profiles to prevent sexual harassment, to people choosing not to speak out on issues or deleting posts that have, or may invite, harmful responses from the government or other parties.

Figure 18: Social media use among survey respondents after experiencing online harassment

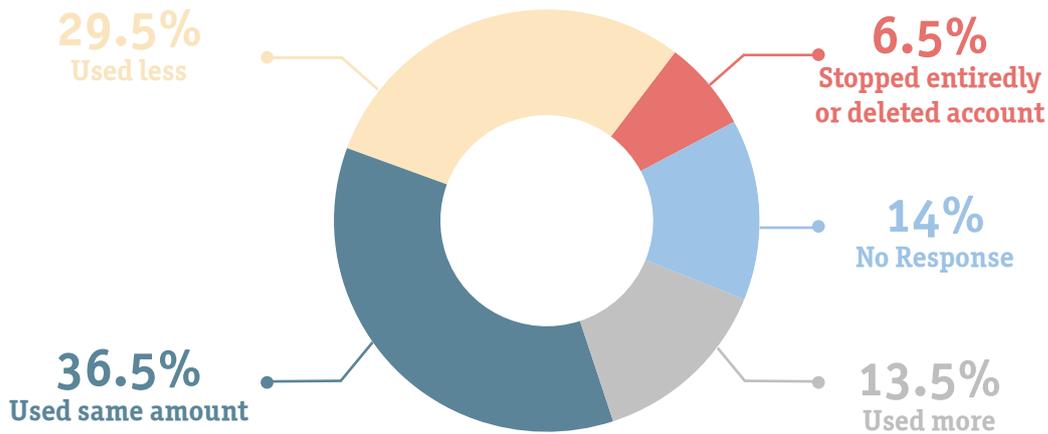
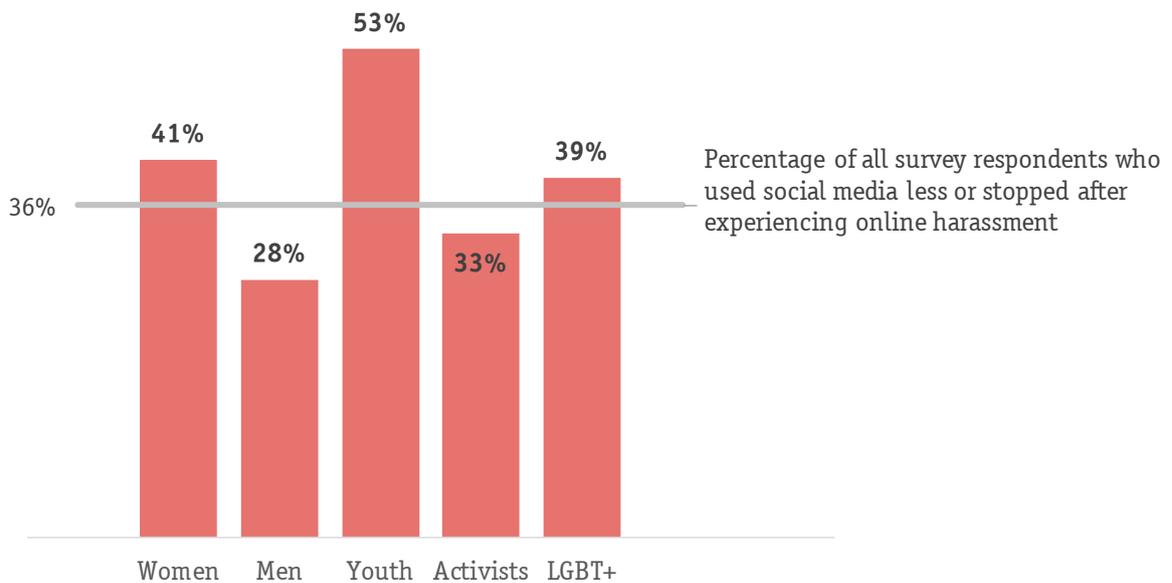


Figure 19: Percentage of each survey group who used social media less or stopped entirely after experiencing online harassment





“ He said ‘Be careful, it is ok for you, but it could be dangerous for your family.’ ”

Leak,⁴² a 26-year-old woman, does not feel able to speak her mind online anymore. “If we express our ideas too much, we can face problems,” she said. “Some information we cannot share at all . . . [especially] related to big businesses or big businesspeople.”

On one occasion, Leak went to visit an area in the capital. She posted a video of the area on Facebook, which happened to be an area where part of a river had been filled in with sand for development. Infilling bodies of water for private development is a long-standing environmental and human rights concern in Cambodia. Someone soon commented to ask Leak if she was afraid to post about that and to point out that it could be dangerous for her family. “It could be a warning,” she said. “It looks like he works for the government . . . Later I just deleted that post.”

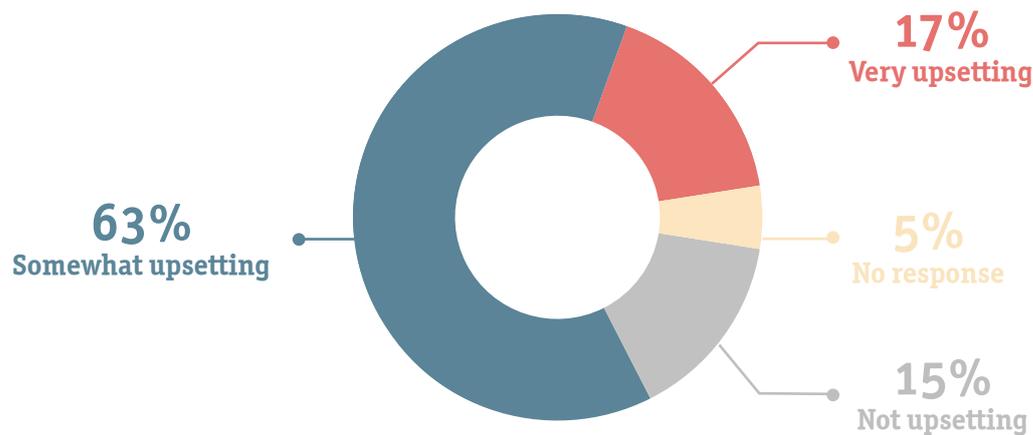
Leak has also felt more subtly censored by others. She joined a Telegram group for legal discussions with about 40,000 members. When she has commented in the group, such as about traffic police, she has been accused of being politically affiliated.

Leak worries for her physical safety, but also clarified, “I think that the [higher levels] do not think I am a problem, it is just the subordinates in the lower levels who always threaten me.” But it has still impacted her online expression. “These days, I do not use Facebook much, I do not spend time on it like before, I just look at it and do not react much.”

⁴² Name has been changed to ensure participant’s privacy and protection from potential retaliation. This participant has also had her privacy violated online, as shown in the case study on page 21 of this report.

Online harassment can have severe offline impacts

Figure 20: Level of distress caused by online harassment among people who have experienced it



Of the people who reported online harassment, 80% found it somewhat or very upsetting (see Figure 20) and 71% reported at least one negative impact.

Respondents most often reported fear for their physical safety or the safety of people close to them, feeling withdrawn or less social, lower self-esteem, or problems with their friends, family, relationship or community because of online harassment. Some reported particularly severe impacts related to online harassment, such as physical harm or violence offline; difficulty finding a job, education, housing or services; or experiencing suicidal thoughts. Youth and LGBT+ people more often reported negative impacts (see Figure 21).

Women respondents were more likely than men to report lower self-esteem (22% of women compared to 12% of men) or to socially withdraw (29% of women compared to 14% of men) because of online harassment. Activist respondents were most likely to be concerned about physical safety, with 39% of those who have experienced online harassment fearful for the physical safety of themselves or the people close to them.

While some types of online harassment were reported by only a small number of respondents, they reported experiencing severe impacts. These impacts can be long-lasting because it is difficult to permanently delete something from the Internet. For example, 30 respondents reported that they have been doxed. At least half of these people reported fear for their physical

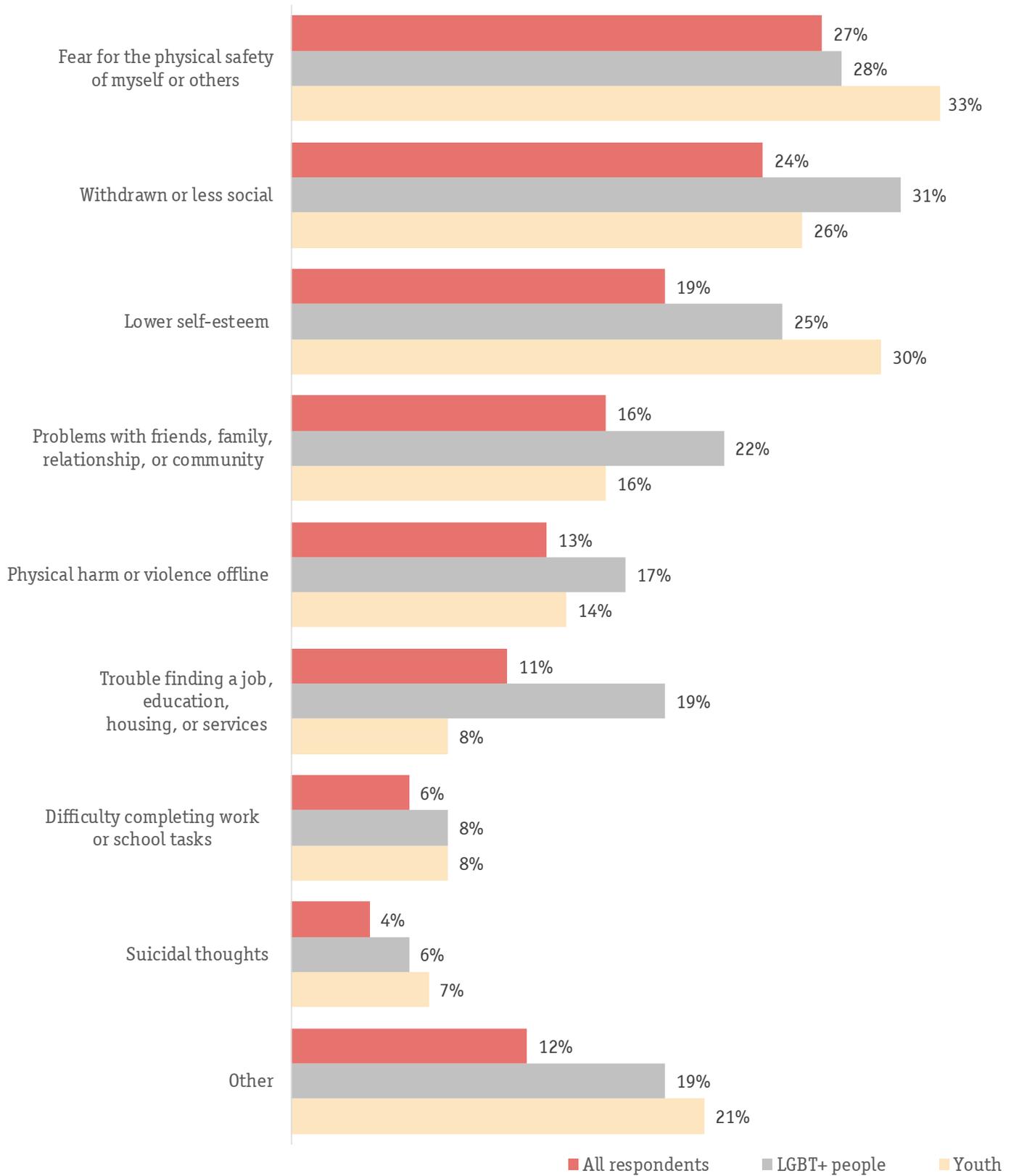
safety; had problems with their friends, family, romantic relationship, or community; and felt less social because of online harassment. One in five had suicidal thoughts, and almost half used social media less.

Of the 30 people who reported being threatened online, five experienced physical harm or offline violence, and over half were fearful for the physical safety of themselves or someone close to them.

Ten survey respondents reported that an intimate image or video of them had been shared without their consent and/or they have been threatened with such action. Five of these ten people reported suicidal thoughts because of online harassment and seven feared for the physical safety of themselves or someone close to them.

Societal expectations that control and limit Cambodian women's sexual freedoms and expression can make the impacts of online harassment for women disproportionately harsh. One woman in her twenties told LICADHO that she had seen a Facebook Messenger group where more than ten Cambodian male members had shared naked photographs of at least four women seemingly without their consent, including by one woman's boyfriend. "That man used naked photographs of a woman and ... sent them in a group for his friends to talk about," she said. "I was scared when I saw that. I do not have that kind of naked photograph, but I am afraid it could happen. For example, they could edit our photographs."

Figure 21: Percentage of survey respondents who have experienced online harassment by the negative impacts they reported because of it



Multiple answers permitted, question not mandatory

“ [The loan company] added others on Telegram ... They added them and then they sent the pictures. ”

Pheap,⁴³ a woman in her thirties, spent over six months unemployed after she lost her job at a garment factory. She started taking small loans from companies she learnt about on Facebook. When faced with COVID-19 restrictions, Pheap struggled to make repayments and the companies began pressuring her family members. Pheap contacted another loan company on Facebook, registered on their phone application, and then communicated with them via Telegram and phone. The app gave the company access to Pheap's phone contacts.

The new loan company offered Pheap a loan of \$1,000, which she planned to use to repay the smaller loans. After Pheap provided her identification documents and location, she was told to send three photographs of herself naked. Pheap was reluctant, but the company staff reassured her. “She said other people also do it,” Pheap recalled. “They said they would just keep [the photographs], they would not do anything to us.” After the company confirmed that the photographs would be deleted when she repaid, Pheap sent them via Telegram. The company then demanded a video of her undressing, and the contact details of eight close family members, friends, and colleagues. Finally, the company demanded a video of Pheap agreeing that they could use the photographs and contact her friends and family if she did not repay. Eventually, Pheap received less than \$500, with the company claiming the rest of the \$1,000 was deducted as fees.

When Pheap could not afford the repayments, the company continually contacted her using approximately 10 different phone numbers. They refused Pheap's requests to repay smaller amounts over a longer period and started contacting her friends and family. “When I do not reply they they contact others to bother them,” she said.

Pheap saw another woman post about the same problem on Facebook. That woman said she had repaid her loan in full, but the company continued to extort her and refused to tell her the total amount owed. Pheap filed a complaint to the Ministry of Interior's Anti-Cyber Crime Department. “But since then, they have not [called] me back even once,” she shared. “I feel hopeless.”

To pressure Pheap, the loan company created a Telegram group of seven people from Pheap's phone contact list and shared a screenshot of the three photographs of her. Her husband's first reaction was to want to get a divorce; after realising that Pheap had been unfairly targeted, he changed his mind. Pheap then filed a complaint about the company to the Royal Gendarmerie, also known as the military police, which have civil duties in Cambodia. But the company has continued to threaten Pheap. They since publicly posted photographs of Pheap and her family, including her children, on Facebook, accusing her of being a cheat and shared the link with her family. “If I was alone, I would not care much,” she shared. “It affects my family, it affects my children, I cannot accept this feeling.” That post was reported to Facebook, but there is no evidence that Facebook has taken any action and Facebook has not provided any meaningful update about the complaint.

Pheap has now deleted her Facebook account. She sometimes thinks about committing suicide. “I have hope but I do not know how long I can stand it because there is too much pressure,” she said. “I have no strength anymore.” Pheap wants authorities to respond more quickly to cases like hers because she fears that more people will be targeted. She encourages others in the same situation to come forward and seek support.

Thursday, 28 August 2020 at 10:00

Your Report

Thanks for letting us know about something you don't want to see on Facebook. You'll receive an update here in your Support Inbox when your report has been reviewed.

If you're being bullied, remember that there's help available. Visit our **Bullying Prevention Hub** to learn about tools on Facebook that can help you.

See Options

Facebook's response to the complaint, three months after it was made

⁴³ Name has been changed to ensure participant's privacy and protection from potential retaliation.

Responses to address online harassment are inadequate

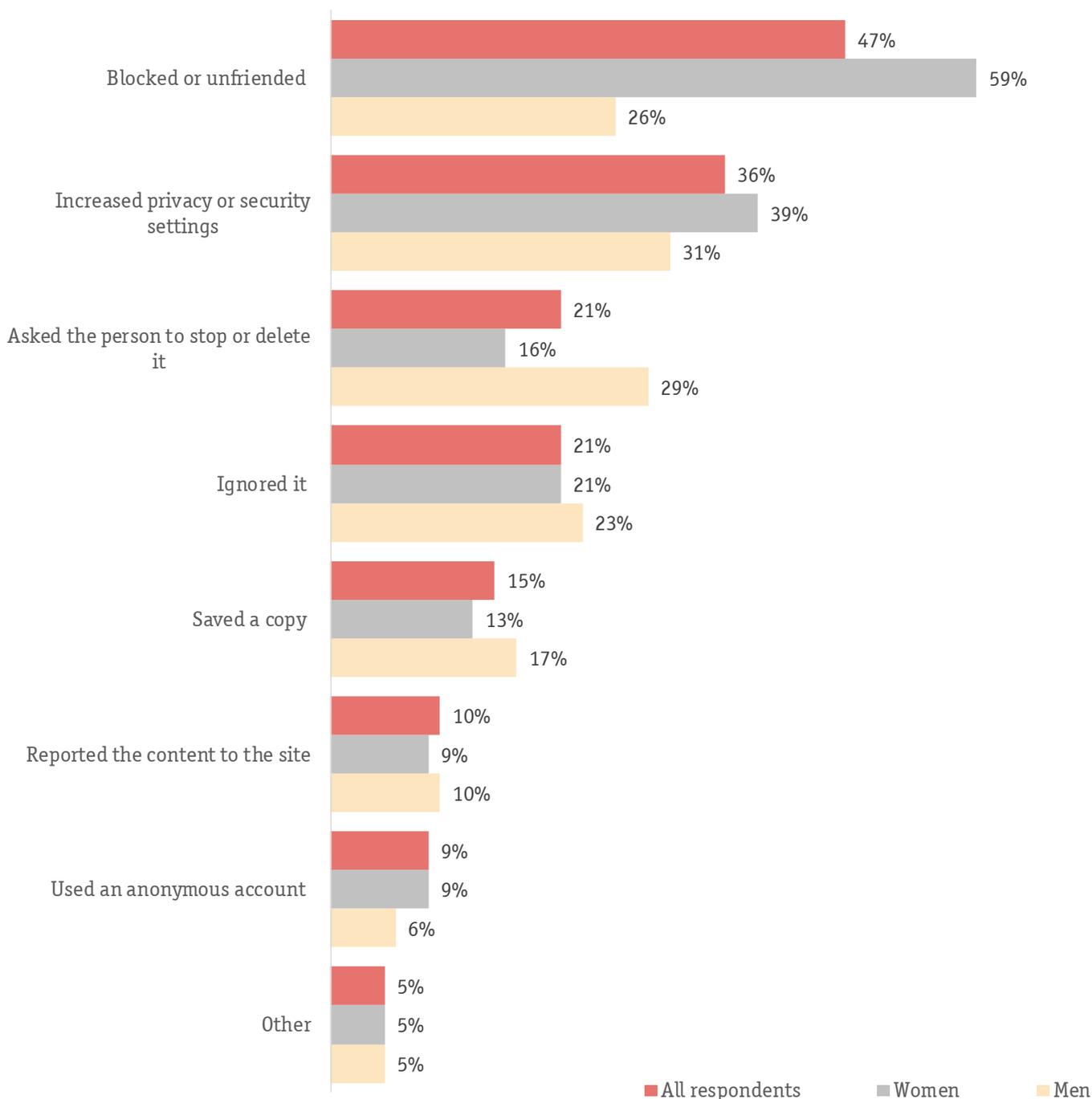
The most common responses to online harassment reported by survey respondents were to unfriend or block the perpetrator or their posts or to increase privacy or security settings. Women respondents were more likely than men to block or unfriend a perpetrator or their posts (see Figure 22).

Reporting experiences of online harassment to platforms, social media sites, or apps was not a leading coping strategy among survey respondents. This suggests that reporting mechanisms on social media are not widely known about,

trusted, or effective. Documenting instances of online harassment by saving a copy of what happened was also not common practice, even though this can help provide crucial evidence against a perpetrator when filing a complaint with authorities.

While blocking or unfriending the person can provide some protection, several interviewees expressed that it was inadequate. Blocking or unfriending someone may deal with a particular perpetrator, but it does not protect against being targeted by others in future. Blocking or

Figure 22: Percentage of survey respondents who have experienced online harassment by their reaction to it



Multiple answers permitted, question not mandatory

unfriending someone was also mentioned as particularly ineffective if the person knows the harasser offline. Perpetrators are also able to create new accounts, and often target people across multiple social media platforms, meaning that blocking or unfriending can only provide limited protection.

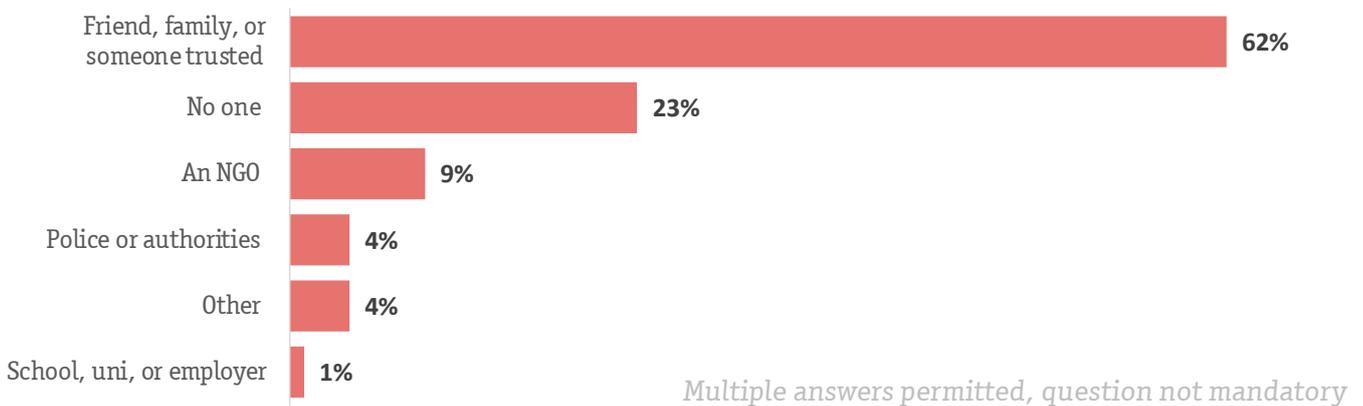
One man in his twenties expressed frustration with TikTok, which suspends accounts that violate the platform’s rules. “Some people’s accounts were blocked, but they got new accounts and posted the same thing again,” he said. “Sometimes they post it from a third account, so the same problem continues.”

Another woman in her early twenties reported being stalked online and threatened by her friend’s ex-girlfriend. Despite blocking the woman on Facebook, getting a new Facebook account, and changing both her

phone numbers, the woman found her new numbers and Facebook account and calls her relentlessly. “She calls both my phone numbers every day to annoy and threaten me,” she shared. When her friend’s ex-girlfriend posted several death threats in a Telegram bio, she felt sure they were aimed at her. “I still live with her threats.”

Most people who have experienced online harassment turned to a friend, family member, or other trusted person, yet almost a quarter did not tell anyone. One man in his thirties asked, “If there is a problem on Facebook or Messenger, how can it be reported to find justice?” Another respondent, a woman in her forties, questioned, “If there are victims, who should we contact?” Only a handful turned to authorities, an NGO, or their school, university, or employer (see Figure 23). Youth were less likely to seek support, with 39% not confiding in anyone.

Figure 23: Percentage of survey respondents who have experienced online harassment by who they reported it to





“ I felt that they do not value me. ”

Pich,⁴⁴ a 22-year-old student and gay man is frequently sexually harassed online. “Mostly people chat with me and ask to see my penis,” he shared. “It makes me feel bad . . . when I see it, I am not happy anymore.”

On one occasion, a stranger continually called Pich on Facebook Messenger to request sexual images. “When I went to a party with friends, he called me again and again until I blocked him, it is really annoying,” Pich said. Blocking was helpful, but Pich said, “It is fair when I block that person, but there is always another person.” Pich recalls several similar situations in which he has been harassed by different people.

Pich does not think there is much he can do to stop these messages, especially because of stereotypes that men are always interested in sex. He also reflects that it can be hard for LGBT+ people to seek or give support to others if they are not out to their community. “Even though I am LGBT, I am afraid to tell everyone . . . Even my family does not know,” he shared. “So how can I tell others to protect [themselves from sexual harassment]? It is hard.”

⁴⁴ Name has been changed to ensure participant’s privacy and protection from potential retaliation.

Interviewees often shared that they believe their online safety is their own responsibility. Several expressed self-blame for not being cautious enough to protect themselves against online harassment and reflected on how their capacity to protect themselves online has since increased. Many spoke of using two-factor authentication, strong passwords, and not sharing their account or personal details with others. Some reflected on the importance of training for social media users to learn how to protect themselves and advised others not to use social media if they do not know how to use it carefully. Yet as many of the stories above show, often no amount of caution can

protect against all instances of online harassment and more structural solutions are required.

Only a small percentage of respondents who have experienced online harassment felt it had been fully and fairly resolved, with most feeling that it was unresolved or somewhat resolved (see Figure 24).

Seventy-six percent of people surveyed responded that at least one actor should do more to stop online harassment. Respondents most often felt that authorities should do more, followed by social media companies (see Figure 25).

Figure 24: Percentage of survey respondents who have experienced online harassment who felt that their problem had been fully and fairly resolved

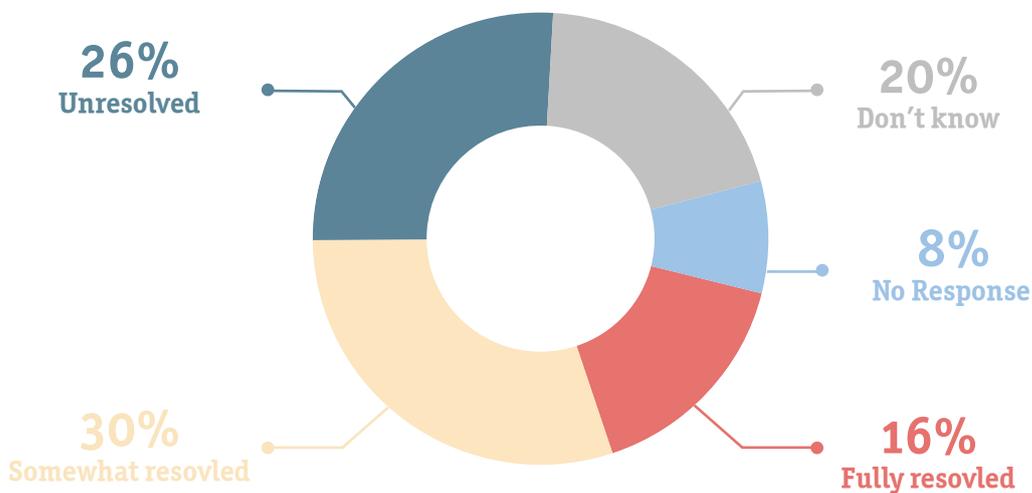
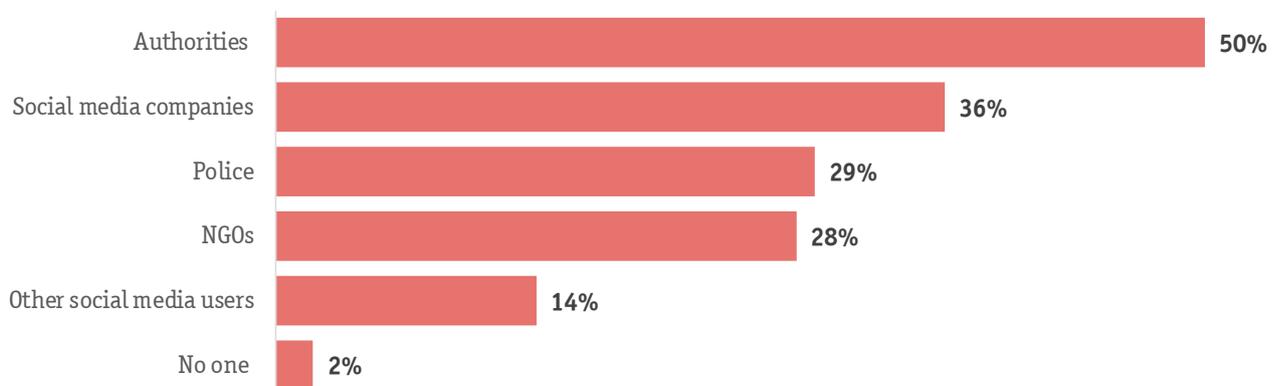


Figure 25: Percentage of all survey respondents who believe that certain actors should do more to end online harassment



Multiple answers permitted, question not mandatory

Responsibilities of Social Media Companies and the Cambodian Government



Both the Cambodian government and social media platforms must take a leading role in ending online harassment. Many acts of online harassment, while harmful, do not amount to behaviour that should be criminalised or removed. But seemingly minor acts of harassment can still push people offline and inhibit their rights. Comprehensive and diverse strategies should be paired with carefully crafted policies on content removal and criminal action in severe or persistent instances of online harassment, with proper protections in place. Importantly, both content removal by social media companies and criminal action by the state must adhere to the principles of legality, legitimacy, and necessity and proportionality.

Social Media Companies

This report does not consider the policies and practices of all social media companies but it will give some attention to Facebook-owned companies and Telegram, as they are both the most used platforms and the leading sites of online harassment in Cambodia based on our findings. Many of the shortcomings discussed below are similarly applicable to other platforms.

Many of the problems raised in this report are already well-documented and known to social media companies. In 2018, Facebook commissioned a Human Rights Impact Assessment of its presence in Cambodia. Facebook failed to release the full report but acknowledged findings such as the significant degree of self-censorship in Cambodia; increasing number of people that were arrested for Facebook content; hate speech on Facebook fuelled by deep-rooted racism; and harassment of women and prejudice against women, LGBT+ people, and other groups, among other harms.⁴⁵ Many of the recommendations have either not been implemented or Facebook has not been forthcoming about their implementation.

Notably, Facebook has not demonstrably implemented key recommendations such as publishing a Cambodia-specific version of its Community Standards Enforcement Report;

creating accessible, clear and succinct content to be shared on Facebook that sets out the basics of how to use Facebook safely for Khmer users; or taking a public position on the legal and regulatory framework in Cambodia as it relates to social media platforms. Facebook also has not issued any public statements about the Cambodian government's surveillance and law enforcement capabilities that provide clear information about the issue for users, as was recommended in the Human Rights Impact Assessment.

Social media companies' terms of service, community standards, privacy and security settings, and reporting features are often confusing, inaccessible, ineffective, and lack both a consideration of context and transparency. They are not consistently easy to find, use, or understand, and not consistently available in Khmer language. In 2020, Facebook reported US\$29.15 billion in net profit globally – a 58% increase over the previous year – yet it has failed to make its basic operations and safety features available in the language of all its users.⁴⁶ While Facebook has translated its Community Standards and most of its privacy and security settings to Khmer, it has not translated many of its complementary tools, guides, and transparency reports. The Telegram app, its privacy and security settings, and its explanations of those settings are also not available in Khmer. This can leave many users without control over their accounts and privacy and security settings. For example, the UNDP recently reported that a significant number of users in Cambodia have their online accounts such as email created by someone else, due to fear of making a mistake, the complicated process, and limited English proficiency.⁴⁷ This challenge is compounded for people who use a range of social media platforms and who are required to understand and manage often changing features with different tools across multiple services.

Reporting and appeal processes are similarly difficult to use. Responses are often slow, and users receive minimal updates about their progress. Some platforms, such as Telegram, claim no responsibility for content or harassment shared in groups or chats and provide only basic features such as blocking.

⁴⁵ "Human Rights Impact Assessment: Facebook in Cambodia; Executive Summary", Building for Social Responsibility, 2019, available at: https://about.fb.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/BSR-Facebook-Cambodia-HRIA_Executive-Summary2.pdf; "Facebook Response: Cambodia Human Rights Impact Assessment", Facebook, 2020, available at: <https://about.fb.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FB-Response-Cambodia-HRIA.pdf>.

⁴⁶ "Facebook Reports Fourth Quarter and Full Year 2020 Results", Press Release, Facebook, 27 January 2021, available at: <https://investor.fb.com/investor-news/press-release-details/2021/Facebook-Reports-Fourth-Quarter-and-Full-Year-2020-Results/default.aspx>

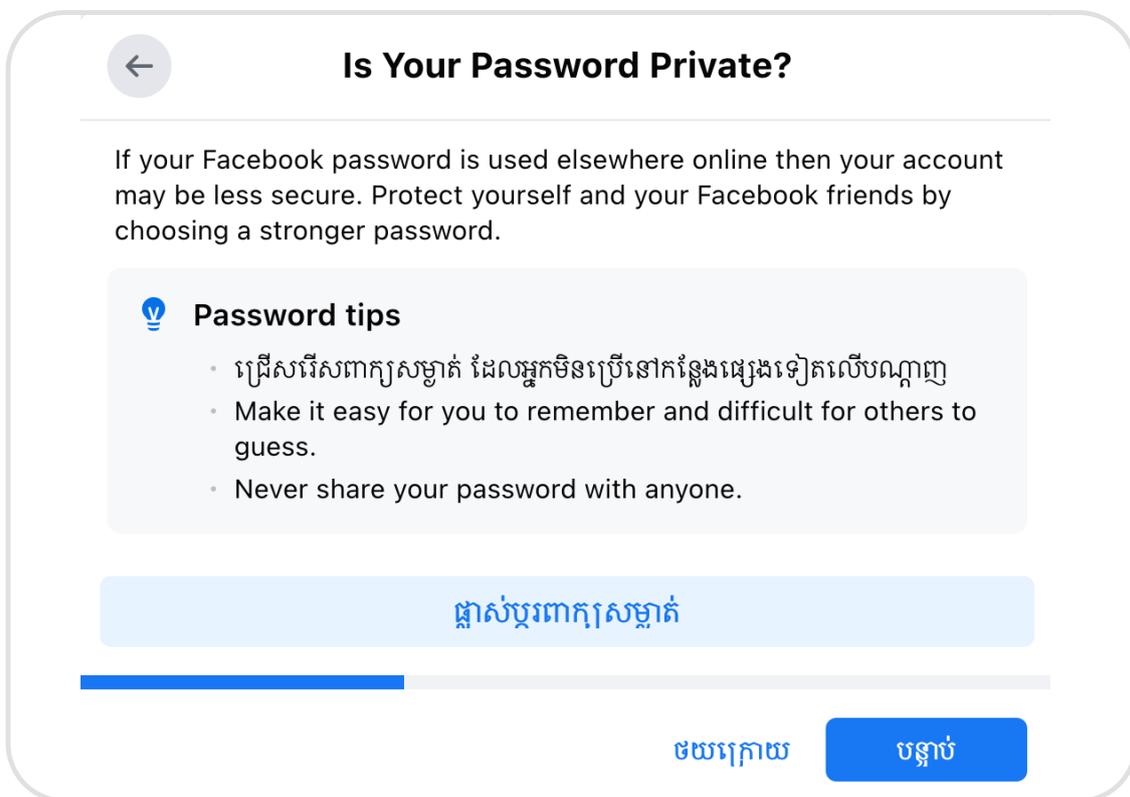
⁴⁷ "Digital Literacy for Employability and Entrepreneurship among Cambodian Youth: Assessment Report", UNDP, p. 30-31, 2020, available at: <https://www.kh.undp.org/content/cambodia/en/home/library/assessment-of-digital-literacy-for-employability-and-entrepreneu.html>

Greater transparency is urgently needed. Facebook’s Community Standards Enforcement Report is global. It is not disaggregated at a country or language level, thereby providing no meaningful information about the situation in Cambodia. Facebook also only reports on the quantity of content acted upon but not the total amount reported. While Facebook’s reports regarding government requests for user data and content restrictions based on local law are broken down by country, they provide no meaningful information about the topic of request (for example, such as those related to child protection, public health, incitement, terrorism, etc.) or the specific action taken by the company (such as the type of information disclosed, content removal, account suspensions, etc.).

In October and November 2021, LICADHO wrote to Facebook to share key findings of this report and request further information and transparency. Facebook failed to provide any meaningful response. LICADHO requested Cambodia-specific versions of Facebook’s recent Community Standards Enforcement Reports, as well as more information about Facebook’s recent content restrictions based on local law, Facebook’s compliance with government requests for user data, and any bilateral agreements between the company and Cambodian authorities to share information. Facebook did not provide

any information in response to these requests. Facebook also failed to disclose how many Khmer-speaking content reviewers are employed by the company, and if Facebook’s automation technology and machine learning capabilities that proactively identify and remove harmful content are compatible with Khmer language. Facebook provided no insight into if or how the company’s content review processes are responsive to cultural nuances specific to the Cambodian context. It did not indicate when it plans to fully translate all of its privacy, safety and transparency information to Khmer. Finally, Facebook failed to share how many Cambodia-based users have been included in Facebook’s ‘XCheck’ system, whitelists, or similar programs.

This year, Facebook released its first Corporate Human Rights Policy.⁴⁸ While this policy provides hope that Facebook will better integrate human rights concerns across the company, the policy arrived years after Facebook rose to global prominence. It remains to be seen if this policy will be fully and properly implemented to address localised human rights impacts, and if Facebook will adequately address the gaps and challenges that arise. To date, social media platforms are largely failing their users and are sustaining an enabling environment for online harassment in Cambodia.



Facebook’s security check-up tool, which is only partially available in Khmer.

⁴⁸ “Corporate Human Rights Policy”, Facebook, available at: <https://about.fb.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Facebooks-Corporate-Human-Rights-Policy.pdf>

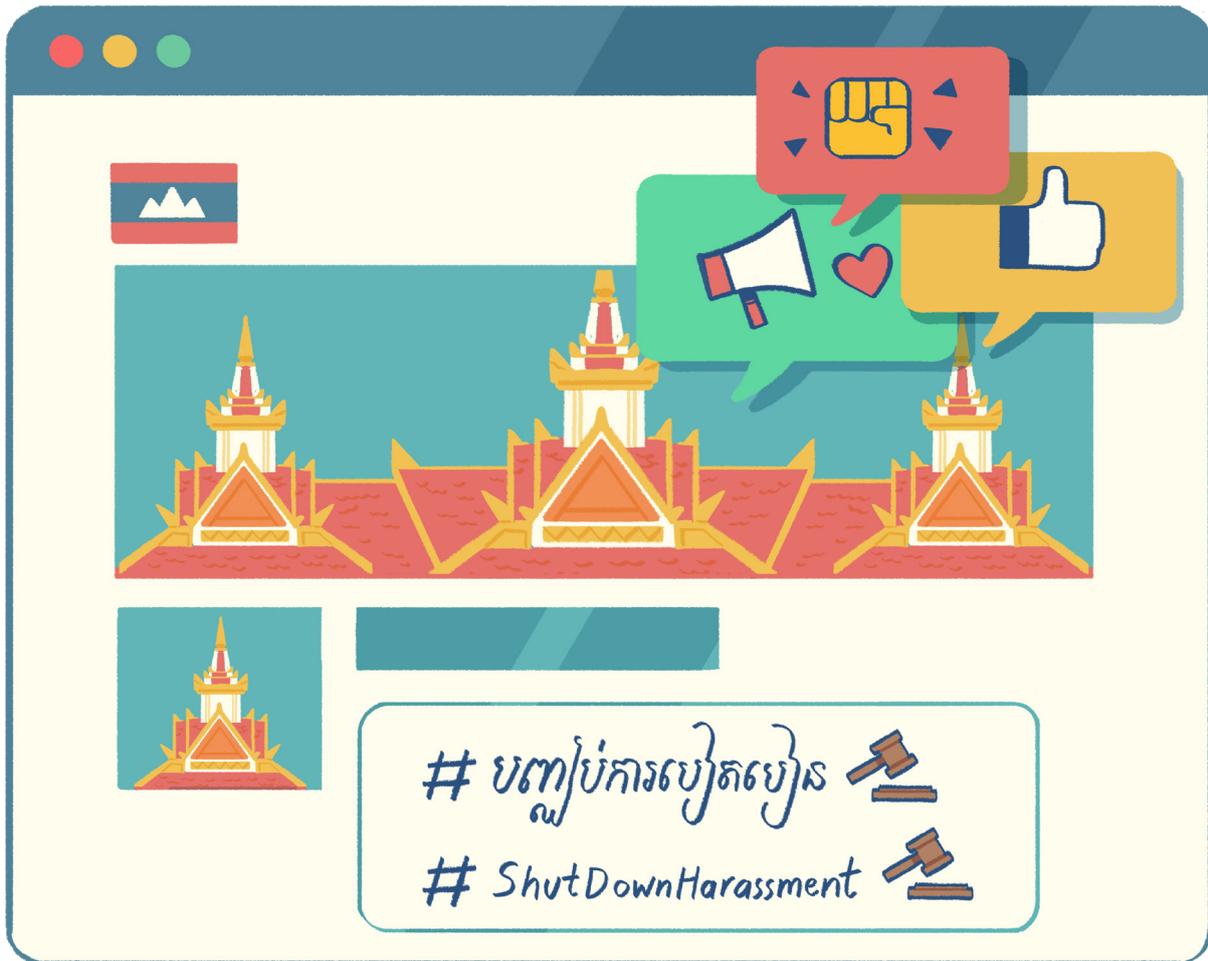
The Cambodian Government

To address online harassment in Cambodia, the government itself must stop being one of the most consistent and visible perpetrators. Instead, the government should abolish overly broad, vague, and excessive laws, and halt the practice of selectively enforcing them to penalize people for expressing themselves online.

In serious cases of online harassment, authorities should apply existing laws to hold perpetrators accountable. The Criminal Code and other laws already prohibit some forms of online harassment.⁴⁹ The Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation can similarly be used to address some cases of online harassment, such as the distribution of pornography or child pornography.⁵⁰ These can provide possible pathways to justice in limited, severe instances of online harassment. The draft Cybercrime Law, which in its current state poses serious threats to privacy and freedom of expression online, would offer

limited additional protections against online harassment considering that many of the offences it contains are already criminalised through existing laws (such as unauthorised access and possession of pornography or child pornography).

Moreover, police, prosecutors, judges, lawyers, and teachers must be given opportunities to increase their digital literacy and understanding of online harassment, its negative impacts, prevention, responses, and the applicable legal framework. Formal high school curriculums on ICT and digital literacy should be expanded to include discussions of how to treat people with respect online and how to maximize social media privacy and security settings. To mitigate online sexual harassment, these efforts should be paired with sexual and reproductive rights curriculums which centre discussions about gender equality and consent. All training and curriculums should be updated regularly to respond to the rapidly changing technological landscape.



⁴⁹ For example, the following are prohibited by the Criminal Code: threats (Articles 231-234), limited instances of sexual harassment (Article 250), limited instances of discrimination (Articles 265-270), intercepting or recording a private conversation and violation of privacy by recording a person's image (Articles 301-302), defamation (Article 305), public insult (Article 307), breaches of correspondence or phone conversations (Articles 317-318), extortion (Article 363), blackmail (Article 372), fraud (Article 377), taking advantage of ignorance or weakness (Article 383), fraudulently accessing an automated data system and modification of data (Articles 427-429), and incitement to commit felony or discriminate (Articles 494-496). The Law on Consumer Protection also prohibits acts which could be applicable to some instances of online harassment, such as coercion by force and mental threat (Article 19).

⁵⁰ Articles 38-41, Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

Conclusion



Social media has huge potential to be a space for the enjoyment and promotion of human rights in Cambodia. The Cambodian government, however, is actively undermining this potential and social media companies are failing to take all steps towards ensuring that their platforms are free from harassment, abuse, and discrimination. More action is urgently needed to ensure that the Internet and social media is a place of connection, participation, and free expression in Cambodia.

As the lives of Cambodians become increasingly intertwined and dependent on online spaces, the cost of logging off in the face of online harassment is simply too high. Social

media is a key source of information and discussion in Cambodia, in light of the country's highly restricted space for free press. The impacts of online harassment are also not confined to online spaces but have far broader impacts on the lives of people who are targeted. This report has only begun to demonstrate the dangers that many Cambodians experience online, particularly on Facebook-owned services and other social media platforms. More studies and conversations about online harassment are needed. Laws, policies, attitudes, and behaviours urgently need to change so that online spaces truly become places where the rights of all Cambodians are protected and enjoyed.



Recommendations

▶▶▶ To Social Media Companies

- **Maximise default protections.** Implement default privacy and security settings that provide maximum protections against online harassment.
- **Localise safety features and make them easy to find and use.** Make all terms of service, community standards, policies, privacy and security settings, reporting mechanisms, supporting material, and transparency reports available in Khmer language and easy to find, particularly on mobile devices. Proactively raise awareness about them by creating interactive content, including videos, which are regularly distributed in frequently accessed places such as newsfeeds or notifications.
- **Improve reporting features.** Enact reporting and appeal processes that are easy to use and which provide fast, detailed updates to both the complainant and the owner of the reported content, which outline the company's action.
- **Increase transparency.** Release Cambodia-specific transparency reports with granular information about the number of reports from users; proactively-acted-upon content; government requests; restrictions based on local law; the types of reports, requests, restrictions or content; and the company's specific actions.
- **Improve proactive detection of harmful content.** Ensure that all content moderation, including human oversight and machine learning, is effective in Khmer language and responsive to cultural nuances.
- **Embrace human rights.** Directly incorporate human rights principles into terms of service and community standards to ensure that content-related actions are guided by the same standards of legality, necessity and proportionality, and legitimacy that bind state regulation of expression.
- **Put users first.** Engage with Cambodian social media users, activists, and civil society to develop better prevention and responses to online harassment.

▶▶▶ To the Cambodian Government

- **Stop perpetrating harassment.** Immediately and unconditionally release all activists and others who have been imprisoned for exercising their right to freedom of expression online. Stop harassing women for their online clothing or speech choices.
- **End excessive and unchecked surveillance.** Repeal or amend the Law on Telecommunications, Interministerial Prakas No. 170, and Sub-Decree No. 23 on the National Internet Gateway. Discard the draft Cybercrime Law and the draft Public Order Law.
- **Repeal or amend vague and broad laws.** Align the Criminal Code with international human rights standards, particularly articles related to defamation and public insult (Articles 305–308), insulting the King (Article 437-bis), plotting (Article 453), and incitement (Articles 494 and 495).
- **Increase capacity to end online harassment.** Regularly train local authorities, police, prosecutors, judges, lawyers, and teachers about digital literacy, online harassment, prevention, responses, and the existing legal framework.
- **Expand high school curriculums.** Include discussions about how to treat people with respect online and how to use social media privacy and security settings in ICT curriculums. Centre discussions about consent in sexual and reproductive health curriculums.
- **Lead behaviour change.** Conduct large-scale awareness-raising campaigns about online harassment through traditional and social media.

Annex 1: Disaggregation of Online Harassment Reported by Survey Respondents

| Type of online harassment | All respondents (718 people) | | Women (467 people) | | Men (238 people) | | Youth aged 18- 24 years (169 people) | | Activists (142 people) | | LGBT+ people (64 people) | |
|--|---------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|------------|---------------------|------------|--|------------|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| | No. of people | % of group | No. of people | % of group | No. of people | % of group | No. of people | % of group | No. of people | % of group | No. of people | % of group |
| Received unsolicited sexual content | 122 | 17% | 95 | 20% | 27 | 11% | 35 | 21% | 20 | 14% | 18 | 28% |
| Hacked or unauthorised use | 90 | 13% | 54 | 12% | 34 | 14% | 25 | 15% | 24 | 17% | 10 | 16% |
| Discrimination or discriminatory language | 60 | 8% | 32 | 7% | 26 | 11% | 24 | 14% | 24 | 17% | 15 | 23% |
| Intentional embarrassment | 53 | 7% | 35 | 7% | 17 | 7% | 22 | 13% | 18 | 13% | 10 | 16% |
| Lies spread about me | 46 | 6% | 25 | 5% | 19 | 8% | 14 | 8% | 15 | 11% | 10 | 16% |
| Threats | 30 | 4% | 14 | 3% | 16 | 7% | 6 | 4% | 14 | 10% | 4 | 6% |
| Doxing | 30 | 4% | 21 | 4% | 9 | 4% | 12 | 7% | 6 | 4% | 4 | 6% |
| Impersonation | 26 | 4% | 15 | 3% | 9 | 4% | 10 | 6% | 5 | 4% | 8 | 13% |
| Reaction by authorities (summoned for questioning, asked to delete a post, or apologise) | 14 | 2% | 3 | <1% | 11 | 5% | 2 | 1% | 8 | 6% | 3 | 5% |
| Threat of sharing an intimate image or video without consent | 9 | 1% | 5 | 1% | 4 | 2% | 2 | 1% | 4 | 3% | 2 | 3% |
| Sharing intimate image or video without consent | 5 | <1% | 4 | <1% | 1 | <1% | 2 | 1% | 2 | 1% | 1 | 2% |

One person may belong to multiple groups. Respondents could report multiple types of online harassment. The question was not mandatory. Some respondents did not disclose their gender therefore the number of men and women may not add to the total respondents



“Educate the abuser to stop abusing.”
- Woman in her twenties

“There should be no harassment and threats on social media.”
- Woman in her twenties

“Everyone should have equal rights to express themselves on social media.”
- Woman in her twenties

“I request the government to open the online space and social media widely.
Do not persecute people who post information related to human rights
violations.”
- Man in his thirties

“If the government and the organisations that work on digital harassment
can provide a lot of training, especially for high school students and in the
countryside ... it is good for them to learn about digital security and online
harassment.”
- Woman in her thirties

“Please help strengthen the online system to be more secure.”
- Man in his thirties

“Let the police and organisations help us because we have been under a lot
of pressure and threats.”
- Woman in her thirties

“Officials at the Ministry of Information must educate citizens. And officials at
the Ministry of Women’s Affairs are also responsible.”
- Man in his thirties

“Please take the most effective measures.”
- Woman in her twenties

“We need to stop online harassment.”
- Man in his twenties



